

LANDER COUNTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewees: Forty-six Lander County pioneers

Interviewed: 1993-1994, 1995

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Description

In January 1993 oral historian Sylvia Arden was hired by the Lander County Board of Commissioners to interview the remaining long-time residents of Lander County to preserve the history of the region and provide information for a socio-economic history. In-depth historical research was completed at the University of Nevada, Reno and the Nevada Historical Society.

Forty-six Lander County pioneer men and women were interviewed by Sylvia Arden. They represent all aspects of life in that region: miners and prospectors, ranchers, businessmen and women, and representatives of many cultures, including a strong Basque presence, and emigrant families from many countries . . . a microcosm of rural America with the strong pioneering spirit.

All of the oral interviews were transcribed. A preface and subject index were prepared for each transcript. The transcripts of the interviews for the Lander County Oral History Project have been bound by the University of Nevada Oral History Program and are available for research in the university libraries in Reno and Las Vegas. Copies of the Lander County Oral History transcripts are also in the collections of the Nevada Historical Society in Reno and in Lander County courthouses, library and high schools.

An educational video documentary, *From the Earth: The Pioneers of Lander County*, was subsequently completed using the wealth of information and materials accumulated during this project.

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THESE INTERVIEWS ARE PART OF SOCIOECONOMIC
STUDIES FOR LANDER COUNTY'S YUCCA MOUNTAIN
PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT PROGRAM.

Oral History Interviews Conducted by Sylvia Arden

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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Lander County Board of Commissioners
and University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

In January 1993 Sylvia Arden was hired by the Lander County Board of Commissioners to interview the remaining long-time residents of Lander County to preserve the history of the region and provide information for a socio-economic history. In-depth historical research was completed at the University of Nevada, Reno and the Nevada Historical Society. Rare historic photographs of Lander County and some of the pioneers were ordered from both institutions. In addition, many photographs and documents were borrowed from the narrators to have negatives and prints made for the collection.

Forty-six Lander County pioneer men and women were interviewed by Sylvia Arden. They represent all aspects of life in that region: miners and prospectors, ranchers, businessmen and women, and representatives of many cultures, including a strong Basque presence, and emigrant families from many countries..., a microcosm of rural America with the strong pioneering spirit.

All of the oral interviews were transcribed. A preface and subject index were prepared

for each transcript. Copies of the Lander County Oral History transcripts are now in the collections of the Oral History Program, University of Nevada Reno; the Nevada Historical Society in Reno, and in Lander County courthouses, library and high schools.

An educational video documentary, *From the Earth: The Pioneers of Lander County* is now being completed using the wealth of information and materials accumulated during this project.

OVERVIEW OF THE LANDER COUNTY ORAL HISTORIES AND BRIEF SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY

The parents, grandparents and great-grandparents of some of these pioneers immigrated to the United States from many countries Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, England, Wales, Germany, Portugal and Canada. Some were miners in the countries they came from, lured by the discovery of gold in California or the Yukon, later drawn to the thriving mines in Lander County. Others came to find a better life, sometimes joining relatives already here.

When silver was discovered in Austin in 1862, news of the strike traveled fast. The man who discovered the silver and a few friends started the town, sold lots, and within one year there was a bustling town with 450 citizens and every kind of store, hotels, saloons and businesses to meet the needs of the quickly growing population. The 1863 Reese River *Reveille* newspaper and an early 1866 directory record this amazing period. It is said the population in the region swelled to 10,000 very quickly.

Former bustling businesses, hotels and bars are now only empty, deteriorating

buildings. The tailings and old structures visible in Austin today are ghosts of the activity no longer present in the small town of about 300 residents, including the sheriff department and forest service employees. But the pioneers still living in picturesque Austin love their home and only move away reluctantly when health care is needed, since there no longer is a doctor or hospital in the town. Family, friends, churches, organizations and the senior center provide a warm, loving environment.

The men and women interviewed tell of their early lives at mining camps, living in rustic housing, attending one-room schools taught by young women who often met and married a miner. The interviews tell of the children's freedom, hunting, fishing, wandering the hills and canyons, racing down snowy hills on homemade sleds and toboggans in the winter and the dances attended by the whole family.

Some of the more enterprising men established merchandise stores at the camps and some daring single women worked at the

boarding houses, cooking for the single men who lived there, and often marrying one of them. The interviews tell about the miners working hard and drinking hard, and many dying young from breathing the silicon dust that ate up their lungs! They tell of the ups and downs of mining. As mines closed, many men and families moved to other mining camps. To supplement their income, some opened a bar or gambling place, others worked on ranches, or the roads as they started to be built, and construction as towns were developing.

Almost everyone tells of prospecting and mining claims, with many disappointments but some exciting successes. Several tell of finding turquoise, said to be one of the finest high-grade blue turquoise in the world. Some of the turquoise was sold to Indians in New Mexico and some made into jewelry to sell in their shops. Ancient Indians dug turquoise from the same hills.

Mining camps and towns sprung up in the Battle Mountain area as the pioneer prospectors discovered the rich ores of copper, gold, silver and lead. The town of Battle Mountain was established about 1870 as a regional trading center for the mining activity as well as for the cattle and sheep ranches. It was once the barite capital of the world until China shipped barite to this country. Their cheap freight rates made Nevada barite no longer competitive causing many lost jobs when the barite mines closed in the 1980s.

The Homestead Act of 1862, enacted to encourage people to settle the West, enticed some to homestead and start ranches. Many pioneers interviewed spent their entire life on the family ranch, starting ranch work as young kids, taking over the ranch as their parents were older, and now their children taking over the responsibilities. Everyone helped with chores, with girls often doing the

same work as the boys. The girls also had to help in the house with the cooking, dishes, laundry and helping with the babies in the family. They all started riding horses at a very young age. and herded sheep, moved the cattle to grazing areas and worked in the hay fields. The women worked hard, taking care of the children, cooking for all the workers as well as their large family, helping with the ranch work, animals, vegetable gardens, canning, doing the laundry and other chores without the modern conveniences of today. Often the men had to supplement the income, especially during the Depression, by working in the mines, roads or construction.

The children of the ranchers attended a one-room school house with a young teacher who usually lived in their home. When the children reached high school age, some would board in Battle Mountain with a relative or friend and some mothers moved to Battle Mountain with the children, renting a house and returning to the ranch week-ends. When the roads improved and the automobile replaced the horse and buggy, the young boys and girls could drive to high school. And then there were school buses, with students hired as the drivers.

William T. Jenkins immigrated from Wales to Canada with a background of mining and the sheep business. In 1865 he purchased sheep and came down to Nevada, settling in Lander County where he started a sheep operation. He gradually acquired several ranches and developed the business into the largest sheep operation in the region. He advertised to the Basque country for sheepherders since they were used to the isolation of sheepherders and their countries' economy was poor. Most single men came hoping to accumulate money and return to their country. However, many quickly realized the opportunities here. Some went back to

Spain to return with a bride or arranged for one to join him here. Some Basque young men came to join relatives already established here. They played an important role in the expansion of the company and Lander County. Through very hard work and diligent saving, many were eventually able to purchase their own ranches. There is a strong presence of the Basques and their culture in Lander County. Some second generation young people have married outside of their Basque culture, but maintain the customs. The interviews with Basques reveal a happy family life in homes filled with the Basque culture, music, dances, the food and language. Most Basque children did not learn English until they started school and the parents usually continued to speak Basque in the home. There are colorful Basque festivals in the region.

When Interstate 80 freeway was built in 1982 and detoured coming through Battle Mountain, downtown businesses were dramatically affected. Travelers used to stop for gas, food and often stayed overnight in the motels. With good highways and automobiles, the big town of Elko on the East and Winnemucca on the West, travelers bypass Battle Mountain. When the County Seat was moved by a vote from Austin to Battle Mountain, Austin declined further. Their only bank closed, since most of their business was with the County. Battle Mountain, now the County seat, with new mines and workers moving into the area, created the need for more schools, businesses, motels and restaurants. The two main casino/restaurants are lively with good food, music and gambling. Geologists, engineers, salespeople and County business have increased the activity and economy of Battle Mountain.

Although agriculture, business and government are important to Lander County's economic stability, mining is still the main

economic factor in the region. With the new chemical techniques used in surface mining, several major mining companies have revived gold and silver mining in the Battle Mountain area. The price of gold determines if mines are going to keep running. When mining is flourishing there is a demand for workers, more housing, better roads, more businesses and the economy flourishes. When mining diminishes, so does the economy. One long-time employee in a mining company predicts in his interview that gold mining will survive, the Battle Mountain area will boom and keep going at the present level for the next ten years and probably better. Without mining possibilities, Austin area's future is not as bright.

Sylvia Arden

CLARENCE GARFIELD ALLEN

PREFACE

Clarence “Doc” Allen was born in Eureka, Nevada in 1906. His father, Charles Allen, born in Iowa, learned the blacksmith trade, then headed West. After ranching in northern California awhile, he was offered a job with the Eureka Livestock Company taking care of horses and cattle.

Doc’s mother and her parents had a station at The Devils Gate, Nevada, where teamsters hauling charcoal to furnaces in Eureka could stop. Charles Allen and Letitia Estella Case met and married in 1891. They lived in Eureka, where Doc was born, until his father started work as blacksmith and foreman for the gold mine at Cortez in 1907. Doc was thirteen years old when the mining ended in 1919, and the family moved to Grass Valley where his father started to ranch.

Doc was right in the middle of the nine Allen children. Everyone had to pitch in with the chores, inside and outside the house. He tells about the ranch school for just three

families. One of the teachers later became his sister-in-law when she and his brother married.

Doc’s favorite ranch activity was to run horses, and he tells how they rounded up the wild horses. He remembers long working days, sometimes eleven hours during the haying season. Doc stayed on the ranch for fifty years and was the only one left when he sold it in 1968 and moved to Austin where he bought a house.

Doc, used to long working days, missed the work on the ranch. He started mining barium in Grass Valley with his brother, eventually leasing the mine to a company. Then he discovered he had a talent for building furniture and bought some equipment and created a workshop adjoining the house. He also spent a lot of time fixing up his home.

Doc is enthusiastic about living in Austin. He likes mountains and Austin is a mountain town, the climate is mild, there’s no traffic jams, and its “just a town my size.”

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project interviewing Clarence Allen at his home in Austin, Nevada, June 18, 1993.

Good afternoon, Doc. I'm so pleased to be here to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Please tell us your full name?

Doc Allen: Clarence Garfield Allen.

I know everyone here calls you "Doc." Where did you get that nickname?

Well, the older boys going to school in Cortez, they named all the boys after somebody that was around there, and there was a doctor there by the name of Doc Mangen—not in my time—I couldn't remember him, anyway—and they called me Doc Mangen. 'course I got in a fight once 'cause I didn't like it. And that's why the name stayed with me, I think. [chuckles]

You didn't like it at first?

I'd get mad because they called me Doc Mangen. And I think that's why they teased me. If I hadn't gotten mad, they probably would have quit it. Well, it's not a bad name. It's not a title; it's a name.

When and where were you born?

I was born August 8, 1906 at Eureka, Nevada

Did you know any of your grandparents?

I knew my grandmother Loucks [on his mothers side]. Her name was Isabell Nichols,

and she married Chester Case when she was fifteen years old. Later she married Andy Loucks.

Tell me about her.

She was a very old woman when I knew her and she worked hard all her life, and she didn't get around good. They finally moved to Hilltop.

Was Grandma Loucks born in the United States?

Yes. Her mother, my great grandmother Jane Mitchler, was born in England, the date and town I do not know. She came to the United States with her parents on a sailing vessel when she was eight years old—I don't know the date. She lived to be ninety-two. [A copy of the family genealogy is attached.]

Did you know your grandparents on your fathers side?

No, but my father told me that his grandfather cut timber along the Hudson River for England to build ships before there was a United States of America.

Tell us your father's name, and where and when he was born.

My fathers name was Charles Allen, and he was born in Decorah, Iowa, May 14, 1862.

And your mother?

My mother was Letitia Estella Case and she was born in Benton, Indiana, December 10, 1872.

When did your father start working at the Cortez Gold Mine and how old were you?

It was 1907. I was a year old.

How many children were in the family—how many sisters and brothers?

There was nine in my family—nine kids.

Where were you in the line-up?

There were four older than I and four younger.

So you were right in the middle?

Right in the middle, yeah.

What kind of celebrations on holidays did your family have? Did you celebrate holidays, or birthdays?

No, never heard of it!

No Halloween parties, no frivolity. Everyone worked real hard?

Well, there were some at Cortez before we left, before we moved to the ranch, but on the ranch, none of that.

Your mother must have been awfully busy with such a large family.

She was. She finally had two Indian women do the washing every Monday. And all they wanted was a dollar. That's all they seemed to know was one dollar. And them two big women washing all the clothes all day long, by gosh, for one dollar a day.

Was one of your sisters Estelle [Shanks] and Frank's [Bertrand] mother?

Yes, Lottie, the oldest sister, Charlotte.

I learned such wonderful things about her in my interviews with them. Can you tell me about her, the kind of woman she was?

Well, she was a great cook, I know that. At the boarding house, she had to bake forty loaves of bread every other day.

I remember seeing pictures they showed me and told me what a beautiful, well-dressed and cultured woman she was.

Yes.

Was she always like that?

Most of the time, yes.

And then your sister Charlotte lived here a long time. You got to be together here in Austin for quite a long time.

Yes. I have a niece lives in her house now—Sally Cook.

Now tell me about your mother.

Well, she was a hard-working gal—I know that much for sure. After having nine kids you had to do a lot of work.

What kind of a person was she? Was she real serious? Did she laugh? Did she joke around at all?

Oh, she laughed at fun I guess, what we called fun in them days, anyway.

She worked so hard with so many children. I'm trying to visualize someone with so many children and so many responsibilities—did she have any time for herself? Any relaxation? Or did she just love the life caring for everyone?

*Anyone ever take care of her, or wait on her?
Did anybody help her with the meals?*

Just when she had the babies, about all.

Did she have them all at home?

No. In Eureka there was a doctor, but out on Cortez was a midwife.

O.K., so there was someone. Did all the bigger kids take care of the littler kids?

Somewhat. After we moved out on the ranch our Dad saw that we washed all them clothes.

So everyone had to pitch in.

He washed his, too.

Really?! He was understanding.

Well, yes. She didn't get a lot of help though. The boys even helped in the morning with cooking breakfast. They didn't do much but make their own hot cakes. [laughs]

What kind of chores around the house did you have to do?

Well, I washed dishes, yeah. That come down on me. The oldest sister, she started washing dishes when she was old enough, and then the oldest brother dried them. And then when she graduated from that job, why he had the dish washing job and the next older brother had to dry the dishes. And when he retired from that job [laughs], why then the brother that was drying the dishes moved up to washing and I'd dry them.

What was your father like?

I don't think he ever whipped any of us kids. But they was too scared of him to do anything wrong, I think. [chuckles]

Was he stern or jovial or serious—what kind of a man was he?

Well, I'd say serious.

Could you sit and talk with him?

Quite a lot, yes. He didn't have much schooling, third or fourth grade, I guess, is about all, but every job that he ever worked on it wasn't long until he was the boss.

Where did all the kids go to school when you lived at Cortez?

We went to school right there, in Cortez.

What was the school like? Describe it.

Well, it wasn't very big. Any school I ever went to was twenty-five kids and they had from first grade to eighth grade. And they had teachers just out of high school. We learned to read and write, and the teacher was the *boss*. And if we got in trouble with the teacher, we got in *more* trouble when we got home.

How did they discipline you in school if you got in trouble?

They had an oak ruler and they'd walk around the schoolroom with that ruler and if some kid wasn't studying and gazing around the room, they'd get it right across the back with that. It didn't hurt anybody, but it scared the devil out of them. [laughs]

Did you ever get punished like that?

Oh, yes! Well, only about once, though, because I was pretty scared. I didn't like to get that ruler.

You said there was about twenty-five kids in your school. So your family was about a third of the school?

No, there was three brothers and myself, was all that was in that school at one time. And then later as they graduated from eighth grade, they went to work.

Tell us more about Cortez Mine and your father's work there.

My father was blacksmith up there, and they did drilling by hand with a single-jack hammer and hand-held drills. My father was a boss and the blacksmith. And they had the tunnel there, and then went in and tunneled. I was there a couple of times, but I didn't like that underground stuff.

Oh, your father was the blacksmith there. What kind of work did he do as blacksmith?

Well, he sharpened the picks and the drills for the miners. He'd do that first thing in the morning, and then he'd go in the mines and see what the men were doing in there. He was a boss, too.

Did your dad work long hours? Did you see your dad a lot or was he at work most of the time?

He worked every day. There was no Sundays off, no Christmases off, nothing. He worked every day of the year and for four dollars-and-a-half a day. And he had seven kids at the time he was making that.

When did you ever get to see your dad?

Oh, he'd come home at night, always. We lived right there. He was home every night and every morning he'd go. And I had one brother that started working that mine when he was sixteen years old.

Did you have electricity at Cortez?

I should say not—no electricity!

Did you have inside plumbing?

No. There was no such thing as an inside bathroom over there that I ever remember of. It was outside.

What did kids do for fun? Did you like it when it snowed?

Oh, yeah. We'd sleigh ride. Lots of hills around there. Sleigh ride on barrel staves. Yeah, we used to do a lot of sleigh riding there in the wintertime.

Where did your family go shopping when you needed to get groceries or clothes? Were there stores at the mine?

They had a general store there, yes. My brother, Andy, was storekeeper for Tenabo Mill and Mining Company.

What kind of things did they sell in that store?

Oh, they sold all kinds of clothes and groceries. And they had horse-hide mittens there. You had to wear them a couple of years to get them limber enough so you could do anything with them. But they sure did last, I'll tell you! And they had shoes too, but they were too big for me. All they had left when I was a kid was the big shoes.

Any other stores there, where you could get candy or ice cream?

They had candy in the general store there, but no ice cream. When we had ice cream, we made it ourselves. Our mother made it and we froze it in the old ice cream freezer. It was rock salt and ice and turn the crank.

That sounds so good.

Yeah, it was good ice cream, you bet.

Were there saloons at the mine?

Yeah, there were saloons there, all right. One saloon was just a old mud shack, adobe shack. They sold whiskey in the store for a dollar a quart bottle. And it was potent stuff, I'll tell you, from the looks of the way them fellows acted that drank it. I was too young to... I didn't drink any of that.

Were kids allowed in the saloons?

No, I don't think they were allowed.

Was there entertainment, dances, at the mine, or celebrations?

We had dances there is about all that I can remember.

What were the dances like? What kind of music?

They had phonograph music—record players they call them now—but you wound them up with a crank. They had a spring in them. And they had quite a lot of dances there all right.

Where did they have the dances?

They had dance halls there, and one time they had dances at the schoolhouse. They had Christmas plays there, yeah.

Christmas plays at the mine?

Yeah, at the school house. There were plays at the school.

How long did your family live at Cortez?

Mining ended in 1919, and we moved to Grass Valley where my father started to ranch. I was thirteen.

Why did your Dad decide to start ranching when the mine closed down?

Well, he worked on a ranch when he first came West. And my mother was raised on a ranch, so...

How did you feel about living on a ranch? Did you like it?

Well, we liked it there. We did a lot of jackrabbit hunting out there, my brother and... shoot jackrabbits for the dogs and cats and chickens when we could find them. Some years there were a lot of them and some not so many.

Did you like it better at the mine or at the ranch?

Well, I liked the ranch the best, yes. Stayed with it for fifty years, so I must have. I was the last one—only one left out there when I sold it.

When you first moved to the ranch at Grass Valley, you were thirteen years old. Did you go to school there?

There was a school in the valley and there was three famili Waltis, Baumanns and Allens. We just went for one year, and then we had a school on the ranch itself.

Just three families had a school?

Yeah, we had to go by horse and buggy. Some of the Baumanns rode horseback to school, but most of them went in a buggy.

Who drove your family's buggy?

I did. I and my brother Jim did too, or Gerald.

How many horses pulled that buggy?

Just one horse. It was a one-horse shay.

How long did it take you to get to school?

Oh, it was only about two-and-a-half miles so it didn't take very long. Maybe three-quarters of an hour or so. Horses did a lot of trolling on them buggies, didn't take very long.

What kind of roads did you have to travel on? And what happened in wet weather?

There was some ditches in the road, and you had to slow down to get through them. The first snow storm we got into, we didn't know anything about it. And we didn't do so good. Then we didn't go back to school anymore [chuckles] 'til the weather got better. And the next year we had a school at the ranch.

A teacher came to your ranch every day?

Yeah, he lived out there. They had the schoolhouse, had the schoolroom and the bedroom and a kitchen for the teacher.

Did your family have to build it?

Yeah, I went to school a couple of years out there, I think.

Do you remember any of the teachers?

Well, gosh, I'll say! One was my sister-in-law! She's still in Reno now. She's eighty-nine!

Tell me about her. She wasn't your sister-in-law yet, was she?

No. She come from Reno. She taught there two years, or a year and a part of another. She taught in Beowawe and Winnemucca and last, Sun Valley. She taught for nineteen years out in Sun Valley. They named the school for her out in Sun Valley. I just talked to her on the phone last night, and she said she sure was surprised when they named that school after her. [Lois Allen School]

She taught for two years at your ranch? Is that where she met and married your brother later?

He met her there. She taught in Beowawe afterward and he worked in the store there in Beowawe. After they got married, they had the store in Beowawe and then they sold that store and moved to Sparks. And they built a store down there in Sparks—a grocery store. And they had it for a few years, and then they sold.

What did you do when you finished school? Did you get a job or work on the ranch?

First work I did for wages was driving the stage from Beowawe to Cortez and I did that for about a year-and-a-half and then I went back to the ranch.

Driving a stage? Was this a horse-drawn stage or a car?

It was a Model T Ford, Model TT Ford truck. Oh, we had trucks in them days. That was 1926 and 1927 that I went over there.

Did you pick up passengers?

Well, mostly hauled freight. And there was some passengers on the stage, but not many. Mostly it was hauling freight.

After you ran the stage and came back to work on the ranch, did you stay on the ranch at Grass Valley?

Yeah.

Describe what your ranch and the area was like.

Well, it was pretty close to an alkali lake out there, one of them dry lakes. And it was cold in the wintertime, I'll tell you; and pretty hot in the summertime. But the ground was good though. It was rich soil, part of it; and part of it was pretty much alkali. You could see for miles around, I know that, but it sure did get cold in the wintertime. Coldest weather I ever saw there was forty-four below zero in 1937.

Did the cattle survive?

Oh, yeah, we had sheds. I was surprised to see them alive in the morning because it was really cold!

Tell us what kind of work had to be done on the ranch?

Had to do what had to be done: irrigate in the spring and get wood in the fall, and some of

them had to work for wages to support the ranch because it wasn't a very big place. And then after World War II when my brother Steve was there, he made it pay, all right. We got enough cattle so he could. And then when I come back from the Army, why I worked there, too. We had two places about thirty-one miles apart.

Was your ranch a cattle ranch? Any other animals?

Yes. We had sheep for five years, from 1928 to 1933. But we didn't do too good with the sheep. 1929 was one good year and then that Depression hit—sheep prices went to the bottom, pretty near. So, they didn't do so good. We sold the sheep in 1933 and didn't have many cattle either, but finally built up a bunch of cattle.

What part of ranching did you enjoy most?

I guess eating supper and breakfast! [chuckles] I liked to ride better than anything, but you couldn't always do that; you had to work, too.

Did you have your own horse?

Yes!

What was your horse's name.

Banjo!

Oh, that's great. So that was what you probably liked to wake up and say, "I'm going to go out on Banjo?" Is that what you liked to do best?

I'd rather do that than eat, almost—at one time.

What did you like to do the least?

Well, everything had to be done so it wasn't a case of whether I liked it or not, I had to do it anyway.

What did you have to do that you wanted to hurry and get it over with because you didn't like it?

None that I can think of But what I liked to do better than anything was to run horses.

Tell me about that.

Well, we had some horses that were pretty wild and to corral them, you had to run, that's all there was to it. You'd lose them if you didn't.

You mean race on your horse, is that what you mean? How did you do it? How did you round them up?

The bunch, whatever, hey didn't all run together, so we went and got 'em and put 'em in the corral. One fellow would get out in the lead and kind of lead them on his horse and they'd follow pretty good.

How many of you would be doing that?

About two at a time is all. My brothers did too, Steve and Andy.

Where did the wild horses come from?

Well, the Spanish come in here and turned the horses loose, and they just multiplied out there, I guess is all. Yeah, wild horses! My Dad went to work for a dude ranch—must have been about 1890—and they shipped seven thousand horses out of that country from around there. That was in Lander and Eureka County. And later, Dick McGee [had a large ranch in Grass Valley] took a thousand out of

that same country. He run his with a plane, though. My dad, he had to do it horseback because there were no planes flying around in the 1800.

Describe a typical day on the ranch. What time did you have to get up, what chores did you have to do, how late did you work, what time did you go to sleep?

Well, I got up mostly at five o'clock in the morning and that's in the summertime. Well, sometimes in the summertime we got up earlier than that. But my mother always got up at five o'clock in the morning all winter long until she passed away when she was eighty-one.

Then what was your day like?

I remember one time, when I was there all alone then—everybody else was moved away or had died. I was stacking hay at one of the places and I put in eleven hours at the stack one day. [chuckles] That didn't include getting up and having breakfast and stopping for lunch. It was eleven hours stacking hay there, all alone with an overshot stacker and a buck rake hooked to a tractor. I fixed the buck rake so I could work it on the back end of a Ford tractor. It really worked good. And I got up in the mornings about two o'clock and walked the tractor the thirty-one miles between the ranches and then later got a truck. But I did go by Waltis place one morning at three o'clock in the morning. Later, they come looking for me. They tried to telephone—we had a telephone then at the ranch at that time. They couldn't get me on the phone, so then Bill Waltis said he thought he heard a noise at three o'clock that morning. I went by there with the truck with a stacker on it, overshot stacker. But I had to do that *every* day.

Did you take any days off or vacations?

I could have, I guess, but I didn't take any time off; I didn't have to.

How long did you stay on the ranch?

Well, from 1919 to 1968. 'course I'd spent three-and-a-half years in the Army in between times.

When you finally decided it was time to leave the ranch, were you glad to finally leave, or was it kind of hard?

Well, it wasn't too easy, but my neighbor sold out and we always worked together, Waltis and I, so I figured, well...And I was offered more money than I thought I was gonna get for it, so I sold it. If I had kept it about three more years, I'd have got prit near three times as much for it [chuckles]

Lets go back to earlier days on the ranch when the family was there. Did you play cards or do anything like that at night?

Yes. A game they called Flinch was one card game. We played some cards, but not very many. Twenty-one, and one they called Seven-and-a-half. I can't remember much about that one.

Before the telephone, how did you get messages to people?

Wrote letters.

More people wrote letters then. How was the mail service? How did you get the mail?

One time we had to go to Beowawe and get it—fifty miles. And whoever would go

from the ranch would get all the mail for the people right around there, and one old fellow tried to get a mail route out there—come out and took up homesteading in Grass Valley, but he didn't last very long so we never got a mail route out there.

Did you take turns getting the mail?

Just when we went to town. There was only three families down there.

I see, so whoever was going would pick it up. You didn't get your mail too quickly.

There was a post office in Cortez later. Before we left there, there was a post office in Cortez, but it closed too, when the mine closed.

What about transportation besides the horse. Did you have a car when the old cars started to come out?

Later we had a Model T Ford on the ranch but it was team and a wagon before that.

How old were you when you could drive that or the car?

Sixteen or seventeen, I guess. Those days every young fella wanted a horse and a saddle, now they want a car. [laughter]

Before you had electricity, what did you use, kerosene lamps?

Yes. First one that ever had a kerosene lamp, I think, at Cortez.

When did you finally get electricity on the ranch?

Never did have electricity.

Never did, even in the sixties? When you needed to shop for food or supplies or clothing, where did you go from the ranch?

We shopped Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs mostly, and even groceries we got from a mail order house in Sacramento. And we could buy a twenty-five pound box of seedless raisins for less than two dollars; and dates, a twenty-five pound box of dates was less than the raisins. That was, well, way before World War II, about in the twenties and thirties.

How did you do that? When you got the catalog and you saw what you wanted, did you have to write them or call them?

You wrote an order and mailed it to them. And we bought all our clothes from Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck.

How long would it take to get your order?

Well, sometimes a week and sometimes almost two weeks.

How did they get them to you?

Well, there was a stage running out to Cortez, and finally it run out into the valley, out to High Place. You had mailboxes out there by that time. But before that, why, we didn't get mail very often. When somebody went to Beowawe, they brought the mail out 'cause the Post Office at Cortez was closed. And then after they started the Post Office over at the mine again in the 1920s, well, then they had the Post Office at Cortez. Sometimes you had to order groceries and then you'd go to Beowawe and pick them up, with a team. It took about four days to go down there with a team. It was fifty miles from our ranch.

When did you sell the ranch?

I sold the ranch in 1968.

Who did you sell it to?

George Gund.

Did your father stay at the ranch until he passed away?

Yes, he passed away in 1937, and was on the ranch until then.

And what about your mother?

Well, she stayed there 'til she passed away in 1953. She was born in 1872 and he was born in 1862.

So she stayed on the ranch, also, for the rest of her life?

Yeah, yeah, she stayed there. I had to take her to Elko—she got bad when she got older. But she wasn't there very long—a couple of weeks and she passed away. My brother, Steve, went up with her. My sister up there had two houses and they lived in one of her houses for a little while.

What did you do then?

Moved to Austin and bought this house.

By then, were you the last one left on the ranch?

I was, yes, the only one.

You had family here in Austin—Estelle and Frank. Did you have friends here too?

Yes, most of my friends were here.

Tell me what it was like in Austin in 1968 when you moved here. Was it different from the way it is now?

In some ways it was different. In the wintertime, the County didn't plow the roads. We had to get through the snow the best we could. They've been plowing the roads now for a long time.

Do they plough the roads in the mountains here?

Oh, yes. The county road crew does.

What did you do before? How did you get up and down these hills?

Easy—chain up your automobile and you could go. Load some weight in the back if it was a pickup.

Tell me, was there a difference in the stores and hotels on the main street. Was it different then?

The Austin Hotel was still standing.

Before the fire?

Yes.

Was that kind of a central point for people?

Yes, it was. It was a good place.

When you moved here, describe the first few years you were here, what your life was like, what your typical days were like.

Well, it was pretty hard in the wintertime. Get up in the morning, get breakfast, walk and look out the back door and look out

the front door and didn't know what to do.
[laughter]

And then put the heat on, huh?

It was different on the ranch. When you got up and finished breakfast on the ranch, you had work to do. And then I did some mining after I sold the ranch.

Oh you did. Where did you do mining?

At the barium mine.

Is that when the barium started, in the sixties?

No, the seventies when the barium was going good. It was my own mine. My brother Steve found it.

And where was that?

Grass Valley, just east of Molly Knudtsen's ranch there.

Is that right? And so what would you do—you lived here but went over there to do mining?

Yes.

How did you do that kind of mining. I don't know anything about barium mining. What's the process? What did you do?

Well, you had to blast to get the rock out, the barium out. I leased it to Bob Morse and he had a fellow come in with an air track and he drilled holes and we blasted ourselves.

Then who did you sell it to? What did you do with it?

I finally leased the mine to an outfit and they mined it and paid me a royalty.

In other words, once you found it and knew barium was there, then you could lease it. How long did that activity go on?

Well, just one summer when we really mined it but we had it for years before that.

I read that when the Chinese started to send barium over, that it knocked the market out of barium here in Austin. Is that what happened?

Yes. They all went to China to buy barium because it was a lot cheaper. They got some from Indonesia too.

Did that hurt your income from the barium?

Pretty near everyone that leased my mine went broke. Declared bankruptcy anyway to keep from paying their bills.

Did you get into any other active ventures while you were living in Austin?

Just building furniture.

You build furniture?

Some. Right there.

You always had a talent to build furniture, or is that a late talent? When did you start building fine furniture?

Since I moved to town.

So when you had time you started to explore talents you didn't realize you had?

Yes.

How did you get started with furniture?

I had some chairs that I didn't like the way they was painted, so I changed them—the chairs we're sitting on.

I was admiring them when I came into the kitchen. What did you do, you just started working and found you were doing a good job?

Yes. Had to have something to do.

Did you sell any of them?

No. I gave most of them away.

You're very talented. And did you have to buy new kinds of equipment to do that?

Lots of it, yes.

SA Where do you do your work?

I got a shop out there.

That's wonderful. Describe some more of the activities when you finally couldn't go out on the ranch and the winters were cold, what were some of the other things that you found you enjoyed doing that you never had time for before. Did you have time for some recreation?

Well, some, yes, but not too much.

What are some of the things that you did find here that you enjoyed? Did you get to play cards?

At home, by myself. Solitaire.

How did you spend a lot of your time?

Well, I got married twice during that time.

That kept you busy. Were they local gals?

No. Well, they was Nevadans, yes. One had moved to Ottawa, Kansas because she had a daughter back there. That was the second one, but she wanted to go back there and I didn't. She thought if she went there I'd follow here, but I didn't.

Who was your first wife?

Lois Mays was her name. She was from Elko, she was living in Reno. She had lived in Ely, too.

Where did you meet her?

In a bar.

So you went to a bar.

I did plenty of that. I figured there's no future in that, so I quit.

How long did your first marriage last?

I lived with her three months. It was a year before I got a divorce.

And it was a mistake?

It sure was.

What else would you do?

I'd go to Elko once in a while to visit my sister and niece up there.

Did you take any little trips beside Elko?

Just back to Ottawa, Kansas. But I didn't stay there. It was all right, but it wasn't for me.

And I know you have a lovely home here. Did you spend a lot of time fixing up the house?

I did. I bought it for \$2500 and put about \$5,000 in it.

It's very nice, and that takes a lot of time.

It sure did. I put linoleum down myself. Painted it.

Do you do your own cooking?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about Austin. What changes have there been here since 1968 when you moved here and now?

Gradually getting smaller I guess, but for awhile it sort of boomed. Got some mining going on for awhile and there was quite a lot of people here.

What kind of people come in when there's mining?

Miners, mostly, but everybody's a miner when there's mining here.

Are they mainly people alone or families come?

Families. Several families moved here. There wasn't any place you could get to rent in Austin for awhile.

What period was that? What dates—sixties, seventies?

It was the early eighties.

Oh, that late! And then the mining ended. Was that silver?

Gold? They mined the gold out and then they quit.

Did the Forest Service bring in new people?

They keep changing most of the time.

And what about the sheriffs—a lot of them live here?

They change them pretty often too.

I see a lot of sheriffs' cars around.

Yes. They have several deputies here. They live here of course. The Sheriff lives in Battle Mountain.

What about the health services here?

There's a nurse comes from Eureka every Wednesday.

Where does she come to?

We got a clinic down there by the sheriffs' office.

I see. Then if people want to see her that day, they go down there?

Yes.

Is she pretty good?

Yes, she's all right. She can give prescriptions. Not many nurses can do that

but she comes near enough to be a doctor, she can do it.

And is there a dentist in town?

No.

Where do you usually go?

Most people go to Reno, but I went to Fallon. Went to Elko first, then went to Veterans Hospital to get my teeth pulled. My first plate made for false teeth were made at the Veterans Hospital in Reno.

Is it a problem for a lot of the older people not having an everyday doctor around?

Not that I know of.

You're a pretty healthy, hardy bunch?

Seems like it, yes.

The Gridley Days are here, which sure livens up the town. When did that nice park and recreation center where they're having the festivities—when was that completed? I see there's a swimming pool, and playground across from the Gridley store.

I don't know just what the date was.

Do you remember when that was being developed?

Oh, yes. I was here in town when that was built, yes. [dedication of park and swimming pool August 29, 1982]

That's a nice addition.

It is. There's a tennis court up there.

And a very nice baseball field. What about the Senior Center?

That was built just a few years ago, the new Senior Center. The first one was down here in what they call the Youth Center now. It was the civic center for a long time. It was originally the Austin Fire House.

It seems to me that that's such an important place now for people to meet at the senior lunch.

It is.

It serves a lot of purposes, right?

Oh, yes, it does. Right now there's a bunch of them come here for Gridley Days ate lunch there today.

Really? Were they ready for them?

Oh, they played music. They come there eleven o'clock and start music and play until lunch time and then they go up to the park after that.

Oh, how nice. I bet people look forward to that.

Yes—some pretty good players there.

I know that for a long long time Austin was the county seat, and has that beautiful county building. And I also know over many years, Battle Mountain had a lot of elections, then finally voted to move the county seat. Tell me what was happening in Austin when the voting was taking place and how it affected all of you.

There was a bank here before they moved the county seat, but after they moved the county seat, the bank moved out too.

Did the bank handle the county funds?

Right, that's why they had to move.

What else was going on—were there a lot of meetings to try and stop it?

They tried to get it for fifty years, I think, but they beat 'em all the time until this last time.

What was the final reason that for so long they didn't get the vote and then they finally did? Do you know?

Sure I know, there were more votes in Battle Mountain, so the Supreme Court wanted to get them votes.

I read in the early days that Austin used to host the Fourth of July celebrations and everyone would come down here from Battle Mountain and all the surrounding counties. In 1968 when you first came, were they still having big celebrations?

They always did have celebrations, but I don't know of many coming from Battle Mountain.

Do you think it was when the train came down that they did that. There used to be the old train that came from Battle Mountain.

No, that's since the train quit the railroad.

Were there more people when the train was coming down?

I couldn't tell you because I wasn't in Austin when the train was running. But I saw the train—shipped sheep in 1929, shipped

lambs on that train. Shipped them to Battle Mountain, then put them on a big train there.

Do they still have big Fourth of July celebrations here?

Oh yes. you bet!

Do people still come from all over?

Quite a lot of people come here.

And I read they used to have auto races and ball games.

That's right.

Is that continuing or slowing down now?

Well, its continuing about the same as it was when I first come here.

Oh, good. When a lot of the businesses here closed, was it after the mining, or is it gradual. There are so many stores on the Main Street that look like they used to thrive and they're not there any more. A few bars are closed, and it looks like a few stores are closed—they're just empty.

Well, before they had good highways and automobiles, all the groceries came in by train from Battle Mountain. They didn't go to Fallon to buy their groceries, or someplace else. They had to buy them in Austin, so there was two grocery stores—three one time, I guess.

Where do they usually buy them now?

Well, they buy right here in town at Kent's store and then some of them go to Fallon.

'cause Fallon now has that great big Raley's?

Usually they don't go there to buy groceries. They go for something else and while they're there they buy some groceries.

I know that some people have left because of health, to move to Fallon, or Reno to be closer to doctors and hospitals, or a retirement home. Have many of your friends left Austin?

They didn't leave, but they died. But when it got so they couldn't take care of themselves, they had to move.

There's no retirement home here for people. That might be good for someone to start.

I missed one of the Senior Center workers one time, and I went down to his house and he'd been there all night, down on the floor by his bed and I couldn't lift him. He was too heavy. He weighed over 200 pounds. Got another fellow to come there and he was a big man and he lifted him up. He seemed to walk around all right, but his daughter come and got him and took him to Reno. And now I haven't heard anything from him for months.

Who is that?

Hugo Ostberg.

Oh, yes, I just heard about him today, that he's in a retirement home in Sparks, near his daughter.

He was a husky man one time, I'll tell you, a really husky Swede.

Can you share with us some things that make Austin so unique, why so many of you love your life here?

It don't get quite as cold here in the wintertime as a lot of places, and it don't get quite as hot in the summertime as a lot of the places. So it's got a pretty good climate I think. And just a town my size.

What is the population of Austin?

I have no idea. Some say four hundred but I kinda doubt that a little.

Just knowing everybody here?

No, I don't know everybody here anymore. A lot of the oldtimers, but they're dropping off one by one.

And what are some of the other things that make it such a special place for you?

I like it because there's no traffic jams here, no heavy traffic.

And you have beautiful Texas roses.

Right, lots of roses. Mrs. Acree bought them here from Texas. When, I don't know but they sure do well here anyway. Never taken care of, no water, nothing. They still grow anyway. I have one in my backyard coming out of the rock wall.

Yes, they're in their full glory this month. What else can you share with us about this charming area?

I always did like the mountains and Austin's a mountain town. I like the mountains.

I certainly can see the beauty of this region.

You should go through Grass Valley.

I'm going to make sure to go to Grass Valley after this interview with you.

What about Kingston?

Kingston is a beautiful place. In the summer you can go over the hill from Big Creek into Kingston or Kingston into Big Creek. Pretty high elevation up there. Kingston is kind of a scary road up there. In some places, you gotta back up to get turned around. It's awful steep up there.

Oh, my! Now before we end the interview is there anything more that you can tell us before we look at some of your photographs?

I can't think of anything.

Do you think we covered everything?

I don't think so, but I can't think of anything right now, but if I do, I'll write it down and send it to you.

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project I want to thank you so much for sharing your long life experiences and your observations for our project. This is the end of the interview.

ADDENDUM

The following information was written by Clarence (Doc) Allen September 1, 1994 to add to his interview transcript:

My father, born in Decorah, Iowa in the year of 1862, wanted to be a blacksmith. There was a shop where a person could go to learn the trade in two years and get paid \$175 at the end of two years.

He did not get along very well with the instructor so he quit the school a little before

the two years was up. He learned the trade but did not get the \$175.

Then he decided to be a farmer [his father was a farmer] so he took up a farm in Dakota Territory before there was a North and South Dakota. His homestead was in the Red River Valley of the north, fifty miles from Grafton, now North Dakota, not far from the Canada line.

He said the Red River of the North flowed north into Canada into Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, so when the snow started to melt in Dakota Territory in the spring, ice would block the flow and the valley where his homestead was would be flooded with water. When the water dried up there was grass for miles.

When the grass was dry in summer they had prairie fires, everyone had backfires around their shacks which consisted of a furrow ploughed around the house and barn if they had such. He was in one prairie fire, he got down in his well which was only six feet deep, stayed put until the fire passed.

Don't know if that was why he left that part of the country or not. He quit the homestead and came west to California to the Sacramento Valley, stayed for two years. The Sacramento Valley was planted with wheat. He said one doctor had one hundred thousand acres of wheat.

After the wheat was harvested, they plowed the land with mules, six mules and a two bottom plow, harnessed the mules and hitched them to the plow by lantern light in the morning and unhitched and took the harnesses off by lantern light at night. Every man had to go twenty-five miles a day. He said there was a saying there that California was a great place for cows and women, but hell for mules and men. The owners' wives all had maids to help them.

He met a man there who owned the controlling interest of the Eureka Livestock

Company in Eureka County, Nevada. [Doc Merrit—don't know if my spelling is right, also do not know if the "Doc" was a name or title.] Doc was quite a horseman. He found out that my father was also a horseman, so he hired him and sent him to Nevada to take care of horses and cattle at Eureka Livestock Co. My father's pay was \$50.00 a month with board and room—room was a bunk house.

My father worked there five years, then at the Dean Ranch in Crescent Valley for two years, then to Eureka to work in a blacksmith shop. Then he leased in a mine at Eureka for a while.

My mother's mother and stepfather had a station at The Devils Gate where teamsters hauling charcoal to furnaces in Eureka could stop. They also had a milk ranch there. My mother, her sisters and brothers were raised there, so I suppose that is where my father and mother met. They sold milk in Eureka, so my mother did a lot of milking cows when she was a girl. My father told me that my mother's mother would get up at about midnight to get breakfast for the teamsters as they were in a hurry to get to Eureka where there was a lot of whiskey.

My father had to go through The Devils Gate to get to the nearest town which was Eureka, so I suppose that is where my father and mother met. They were married in 1891. The family home was in Eureka until 1907 when we moved to Cortez, Nevada. I was one year old at the time. Dad worked at Cortez as blacksmith for the Tenabo Mill and Mining Company. He was foreman from 1910 until 1919 when the mine shut down. He still did the blacksmithing. His wages were \$4.50 in 1910 and 1912, which was one dollar more than anyone else was paid.

So, he was a cowboy, blacksmith, miner, then bought a small ranch in 1914 in Grass

Valley, Lander County, Nevada while he was still boss and blacksmith at Cortez, Nevada.

FAMILY GENEAOLOGY

FAMILY GENEALOGY PREPARED BY
CLARENCE (DOC) ALLEN

JANE MITCHLER, mother of ISABELL
MELVINA NICHOLS, CASE, LOUCKS

JANE MITCHLER, born in England. Came to the United States at age of eight years on a sailing vessel, with her family.

The old BIBLE in the trunk was her mother's and was brought from England at the same time. JANE MITCHLER lived to be ninety-two years of age.

GRANDMA LOUCKS' maiden name was ISABELL MELVINA NICHOLS. She married CHESTER CASE when she was fifteen years old.

She had one brother, WILLIAM NICHOLS, who was killed in Eureka and was buried in OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

GRANDMA and her family came west in 1867 and settled at the HAY RANCH near EUREKA, NEVADA, which belonged to her brother, William Nichols, at that time. Mr. CASE returned some years later to Indiana and never came West again. Grandma did not want to return to the East because she was never well when she lived there, so she stayed in the West.

Sometime later GRANDMA married ANDREW (ANDY) LOUCKS. GRANDPA and GRANDMA LOUCKS operated a way station west of Eureka at the DEVIL'S GATE.

GRANDPA LOUCKS died October 14, 1906, one day before his birthday, at the age of 79. GRANDMA LOUCKS died in Hilltop, Nevada April 19, 1918, age 76, and is buried in Cortez, Nevada.

LETITIA ESTELLA CASE, daughter of ISABELL MELVINA and CHESTER CASE, was born at BENTON, INDIANA on December 10, 1872. She married CHARLES ALLEN who was born in DECORAH, IOWA May 14, 1862. They were married in Eureka, Nevada.

To this marriage was born: CHARLOTTE MELVINA ALLEN, born at the Devil's Gate, Eureka County, Nevada June 9, 1893. Died Nov. 21, 1990, age 97 years. Buried in Austin.

ANDREW ISAAC ALLEN, born in Eureka, Nevada, July 14, 1896. Died in Reno, Nevada Feb. 6, 1972. Buried in Reno in the Masonic Memorial Gardens.

STEPHEN BRYAN ALLEN, born in Eureka, Nevada Sept. 20, 1899. Died in Elko, Nevada Jan. 14, 1960, age 60. Buried in Elko, NV.

CHARLES RUSSEL ALLEN, born Eureka, NV, Jan. 10, 1902. Died Feb. 24, 1935 in Beowawe, NV. Buried in Cortez, NV

CLARENCE GARFIELD ALLEN, born Eureka, NV, Aug. 8, 1906

GERALD LINCOLN ALLEN, born Cortez, NV, November 20, 1908. Died May 24, 1977. Buried in Elko, NV.

KATHERINE MAVIS ALLEN, born Cortez, NV. March 21, 1910. Died Shelly, Idaho April 26, 1967, 56 years old. Buried in Shelly, Idaho.

RICHARD SHERMAN ALLEN, born Cortez, NV, April 23, 1913. Died in Elko, NV. Nov. 23, 1926. Buried in Cortez, NV.

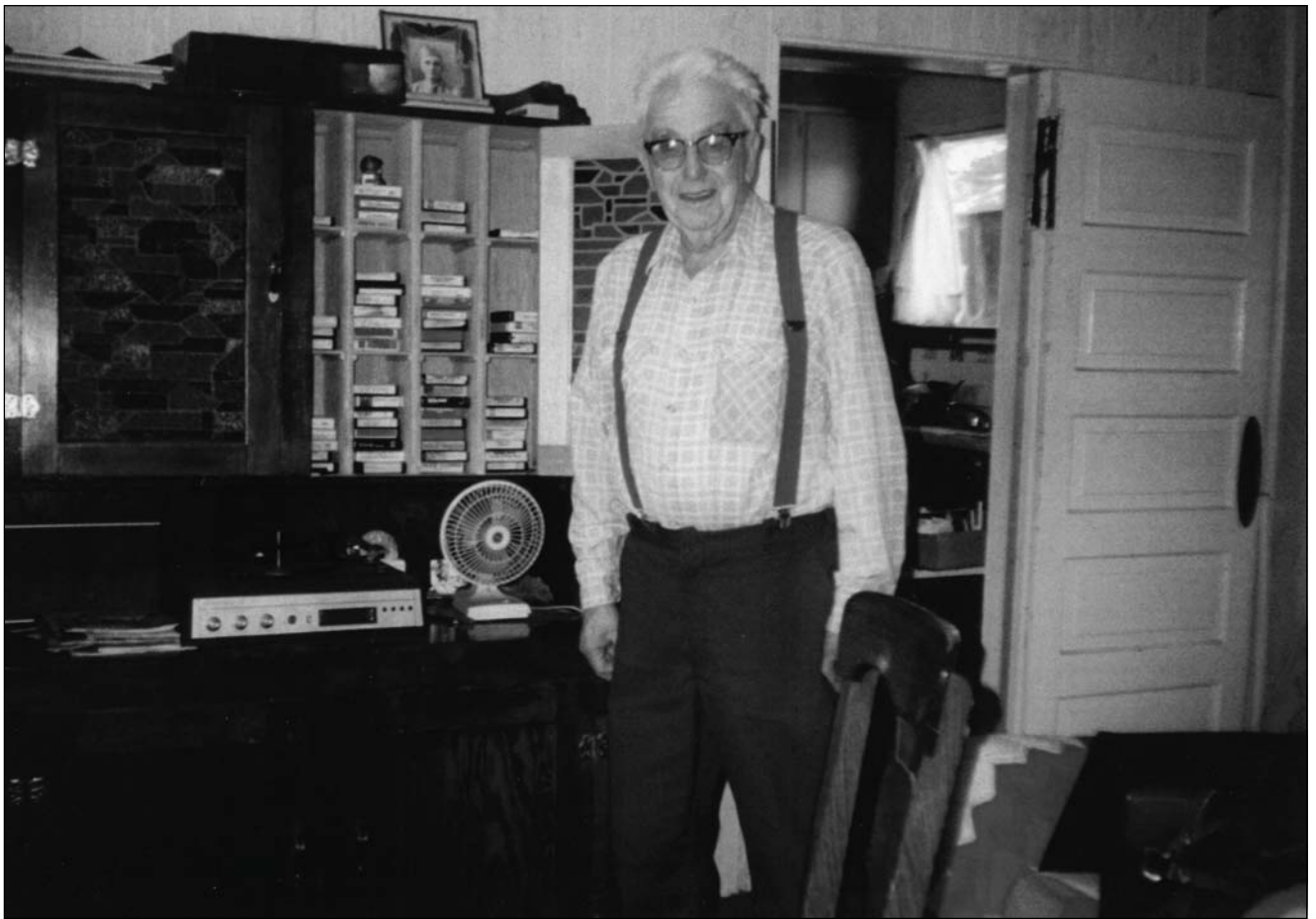
LETITIA MAY ALLEN, born in Cortez, NV
March 28, 1916

Father, CHARLES ALLEN, died at ALLEN RANCH Nov. 13, 1937, age 75.

Mother, ESTELLA ALLEN died in Elko, NV, August 19, 1953, age 81

Both are buried at Cortez, Nevada

CLARENCE GARFIELD ALLEN
PHOTOGRAPHS



CLARENCE ("DOC") ALLEN
JUNE 18, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Cortez Mining Town - Main Street

(Original snapshot owned by Elsie Allen)



Charles and Estella Allen, Eureka, Nevada, ca. 1893. Parents of Clarence “Doc” Allen and Gerald “Jim” Allen. and Grandparents of Frank Allen Bertrand and Estelle Bertrand (Saralegui) Shanks.

(Original photograph owned by Estelle Shanks)



Allen Ranch School, Dec. 1922
All the Allen children: Dick, Jim, Clarence (Doc), Lottie, and Kate.

(Original photograph owned by Doc Allen)

CLARENCE GARFIELD ALLEN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Clarence "Doc" Allen Interview

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PREFACE

In 1888, Elsie Walti Allen's paternal grandfather, Theodore Walti, and his sixteen year-old son Fritz, traveled by ship from Switzerland to the United States, then crossed the country to a ranch near Austin, Nevada. Mr. Walti's brothers and sisters had already established ranches there

Fritz Walti worked on the ranch and learned to read and write the English language at a nearby school. He then went to his uncles' ranch in Grass Valley where he worked for many years, saving his wages and eventually bought the ranch. He now wanted a bride from Switzerland, and wrote back to a girl he remembered. She said no, but younger sister Karolina Markwalder said she wanted to come. Karolina traveled to Iowa, where an older brother lived and Fritz went there to meet her. They married and traveled by train and buggy to Fritz's ranch in Grass Valley, Nevada.

Elsie was their third child, born in 1909. The family only spoke the Swiss language, and Elsie first learned English when she started

school, which was a one-room schoolhouse built for the two families living there. The neighboring family was also Swiss.

Elsie tells of the hard work on the ranch. She and her two older brothers started as young children working in the hay field and tending the animals. But they also had a lot of fun. The family dug a swimming pool at their ranch, and people from neighboring ranches or the Cortez mine would go to the Walti Ranch to swim. Elsie's husband-to-be, Gerald (Jimmy) Allen was one who frequently visited the ranch.

The Cortez mine was booming then, and there were dances at the mining camp. Elsie's father-in-law worked at the Cortez mine.

Elsie and Jimmy moved to Austin when they married in 1936 and Jimmy worked in a silver mine. His brother found turquoise in Grass Valley and staked claim. They started mining turquoise, and soon had buyers coming from Arizona and Mexico, and also sold turquoise through the mail. Elsie, their little daughter and Jimmy lived in a trailer near the mine during the summers.

Horseback riding always was, and still is, Elsie's favorite activity. She has three horses in a large a corral behind her little house on a steep hill. Now 84, despite her arthritis forcing her to use a cane, she still rides with friends, sometimes taking a trailer to enjoy the canyons and countryside.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Elsie Allen at her home, at 390 First Street, Austin, Nevada, on June 18, 1993.

Elsie, I'm so pleased that you're allowing us to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Can you give us your full name?

Elsie Allen: Elsie E. Allen.

And where were you born?

In Walti Hot Springs, [Eureka County, Nevada]. That's a ranch out forty-five miles from Austin.

What date were you born?

October 28, 1909.

Can you tell us anything about your grandparents?

Yes, my grandparents—that is, my grandfather—came over from Switzerland.

Was that your mother's or your father's father?

Father's.

And what was his name?

Theodore Walti.

When you say he came over from Switzerland, was he married when he came?

Yes, my dad came with him when he was sixteen years old.

What about your grandmother?

Evidently she must have passed away, because I didn't know anything about her.

And what brought them from Switzerland to the United States?

An opportunity so they could make a good living.

Did they have someone they knew already in the United States?

Yes, my grandfather had a brother here.

Where did his brother live?

On this ranch that they came to.

And what ranch was that?

Well, it was eventually called Walti Hot Springs.

Where you were born?

Yes.

Did you know your grandfather?

No.

Then let's move to your father, who came as a young boy from Switzerland. What was his name?

Fritz Walti.

He was the only child?

No, he had a brother and two sisters. The brother was here in America, but the sisters were in Switzerland.

And they were older? He was the youngest?

I don't know.

Did he tell you much about his father, your grandpa?

No.

Did he tell you much about his early life on that ranch?

I guess so, but [laughs] I didn't remember it.

Alright, so then let's get to your mother. Tell me your mother's name.

Karolina Markwalder.

Where was she born?

In Switzerland.

When did she come over here?

My father decided that he needed a wife, so he wrote back to the Markwalder family. He knew of the Markwalder family, and there was

one sister that he thought would come over, but she said "no." But Karolina spoke up and said "yes," she would come.

[laughs] How cute! Was she much younger than your dad?

Six years.

Did she know him?

No, just as a child, they spoke of him.

She probably was the one with more adventure, wanting to come to America?

Evidently!

Did they tell you about their first meeting when she came over to America, when they saw each other and knew they were going to get married?

Yes. She had a brother in Iowa. My father went back to Iowa, and they met there and got married. Then they came by train to Beowawe, and from Beowawe they used a buggy to come to the ranch.

Did your mother ever tell you what it felt like to come and meet someone that you only knew vaguely, and then knew you were marrying and going to be living with? Did she ever talk about that?

Yes.

Tell me about it.

Well, of course she just knew the Swiss language, and so she had to learn the American language. And then all the customs were

different, and ranch life was different than what she was used to. So then she just got accustomed to things the way they were.

Did your mom and dad fall in love?

Evidently!

Did your dad talk to you at all about his writing, and when she came, how he felt about it? Or what the experience was like?

Yes, they spoke about it a lot when I was younger, but now, I don't really remember too much about it.

Tell me a little bit about your father and what kind of a person he was.

Well, my father was young when he first came. Then of course, after living on the ranch and that, why, he got accustomed to the way things were done here. He was a person that was very outspoken, had a good temper. So he just adapted himself to the ranch life.

You were born on the ranch?

Yes.

First of all, how long did you live on that ranch?

Well, all my life, except during the time that I married and moved away to Austin.

Okay, so going back to those early ranch days, from your earliest recollection, what was the ranch like? Tell me a little bit about that.

It was *hard*, and it was very economical and they grew up under strict rules and hard times, so therefore, there was nothing, as far

as pleasure. We had to all work, and we all had to save.

How many lived on this ranch?

Well, just my two brothers, my mother and father, and myself.

Who was the first child of these three children?

My brother, William.

And the second one?

The brother Emil.

So you were the baby of the family?

Right.

What were the difference in ages between your brothers and you?

Well, there was another birth, but it didn't materialize, so there was about three-and-a-half years between youngest brother and myself.

What kind of a ranch was it? Were there cattle? sheep? or what did you raise? Describe the kind of a ranch it was.

Mostly cattle. And then, of course, in the later years, they tried to get sheep, but that didn't work out. So mostly cattle.

Did your grandfather buy that ranch? or homestead?

No, my grandfather's brother—my dad's uncle—had the place. They went into partnership, and then eventually my dad bought my uncle out.

And then did your father inherit that ranch?

Yes, it was his.

Were there other animals on the ranch? or was it mainly cattle? Did you raise any produce? Tell me a little more about it.

Well, we had the horses, of course, to ride, and the horses to work, like hauling with the wagons and doing the haying—that was all done with the horses. Of course we had chickens and we had pigs, and occasionally a sheep, but that's about the extent of it.

Sounds like a lot! Was your work on the ranch, or mainly in the house with your mother?

I worked *both* places.

Tell me some of your early chores.

Well, as far as chores, I didn't really do so many chores, but as soon as I was old enough I worked in the hay field, and I had to lead the derrick horse. The horse pulled the hay up onto the stack, and then I had to lead it back and forth.

How old were you when you started doing that?

Oh, I don't know.

As long as you can remember?

Yes.

Quite young?

Quite young.

Then you did the same kind of work your brothers did?

Uh-huh, except not quite with the machinery.

Tell me a little bit more about your work on that ranch.

Well, of course it was doing housework, helping my mother inside. And then I was helping with the riding outside, like whenever there was anything to do—get cows or whenever there was branding and like that. I don't know, just was busy all the time.

Now let's go to the period when you started grammar school. First, where was the school in relationship to the ranch?

They built a little one-room [school] two-and-a-half miles from the ranch, and it was two-and-a-half miles from the neighbors', the Bowmans. Then the schoolteacher would live one year with the family, and then if she stayed another year, she lived with the other family the other year. And of course it was just the one room, and she taught all the grades.

Now, when the teacher lived with you, did she become part of the family, or did she just stay to her own life? What did she do when she lived on the ranch?

She had a room for herself, but then she ate with the family and was with the family.

Did she participate in any of the ranching?

No.

How many times did the teacher live with you over that period?

Well, it would just be every other year. And of course there was only one teacher, I think, that came back twice. Usually it was just a new person, a young girl, just out of school.

To get her experience?

Uh-huh. So it was just between the families.

You probably had quite a few teachers, then, stay with you over the years?

Right.

Can you remember any specifically that had any influence on you, or that became a little more involved, personally, while she was living with you?

Yes, the seventh- and eighth-grade teacher. She was an older person and she tried to teach the Bible and she made a person memorize some of the verses out of the Bible. She was quite knowledgeable and wanted to share the world with you, you know.

Tell me a little about how many children were in that one-room school.

Well, of course my two brothers went, and then there were two boys from the Bowmans—so there were four until I went to school. And of course we all had to learn the English language—we all just spoke Swiss before we went to school. And then, of course, my mother and father also learned the American language. Well, of course I went as long as my brothers went to the eighth grade. I went when I was old enough, six years old. And then my brothers graduated from the eighth grade, and also the Bowman boys

graduated, but then the younger ones came in. So there were always, well, three or four.

So you could get a lot of individual attention?

Yes.

So in other words, your family just spoke Swiss for many years. Of course they'd have no other reason not to. So even when you were young, your brothers were starting to learn English, right?

Uh-huh, so I didn't really speak Swiss. I understood it, I can *still* understand it, but I can't speak it. I guess in my young years, I *had* to speak it, but I don't remember.

After you started to go to school and learn English, and your parents started to learn English, did they speak to each other in Swiss, or begin to speak in English?

My mother always reverted back to Swiss, but my dad always spoke English.

Did your parents become American citizens?

Yes, both of them.

Was that early, before you were born?

No, it was after they had learned the language and everything.

Back into your home life: tell me some of the Swiss customs, or holidays, or food, that made your home unique with parents from Switzerland.

Well, at Christmastime, my mother always made special cookies, called krabali.

You're going to have to spell that later!

And of course she had a lot of her Swiss way of cooking the different things. She would mostly cook just the American way.

Were there Swiss holidays?

I don't remember having any Swiss holidays.

Beside those treats that your mother made, were there other Swiss dishes that might not be typical in America?

Yes, she made applesauce in a different way, and she cooked potatoes in a different method. But mostly she just went the American way.

So you really only had one other family with children to interact, and not a lot of time to play, in your childhood?

Yeah. Well, the Bowmans were also from Switzerland, so then it was like brothers and sisters, really.

Like one great big happy family?

Uh-huh.

I see. And through your elementary school was there any other kind of recreation or outside social life besides the two families?

No, just what the families—like for Christmas and Easter, they would have special things then. My mother was quite religious, from her background.

Was there a church nearby?

No, there was never a church.

Did she miss that?

Yes.

Did she ever talk to you about missing her home in Switzerland?

Yes. She had enough money saved together because everybody that came through, it was kind of a stopping-off place, and she would serve them supper and breakfast, and charge a small amount for a room. And she had enough money that she could take a trip back to Switzerland.

What year did she go back?

No, she didn't go back. She had the money, but my dad needed the money. There was a dry farmer had taken up the land, and he wanted to sell, and my father figured that he needed that land, so they used that money to improve the ranch.

Did your mother talk about how she felt? I know she probably wanted him to buy the ranch, but did it kind of take away some dreams when she couldn't go back?

Well, she seemed to accept it.

Did anyone of the family from Switzerland come to visit?

No, but then this brother that was living in Iowa, did move to California, so he was at the ranch a lot when I was smaller. After I grew up, I went to California to high school, so I saw the family.

Was that your mother's family, or your father's family?

My father's and mother's family were in California.

Oh, both! That's good! Now, staying in your school years, were there any subjects that you started to like more than others that started to determine the kinds of things that you would excel at better, or liked better than others?

No, I don't think I was too good a scholar! [chuckles]

Then did you go to high school?

I went to high school in Santa Cruz, California.

Oh, tell me about how the decision was made to send you there.

When I graduated from the eighth grade, my dad's uncle came through. He was buying cows. They decided they needed a babysitter for one of his sons, my second cousins—so they took me to California.

How old were you?

I must have been about thirteen.

How did you feel about it?

Terrible! [laughs]

In other words, you had no say in the decision?

Oh, yes, yes, I wanted to go, but it was such a change, you know. And of course I went in the fall, so I went just back into the eighth grade, just to pass time and get acquainted with the system, because you know there was quite a change.

What part of California?

Santa Cruz.

Oh, that's a pretty place.

So I went into the eighth grade, and then of course in January when high school started, I went into high school. I stayed with these cousins and I did the babysitting and helping with the housework.

Did you make friends in the school?

Yes, to a certain extent, but not really. I didn't partake in any of the sports or anything because I felt I had to help at the family.

So your social life was limited in high school?

Yes.

How long did you stay there? All through high school?

I stayed a few years, and then I came home in the summertime. And then I decided I wasn't going to go back, and then the other cousin decided to take me, so I thought, "Yeah, I'll try that."

Where was that?

In Santa Cruz, another home. And so I went and stayed with them. And of course I did housework and the laundry and the ironing and like that. And so, therefore, I just went to school and then came home.

Was that your senior year?

Yeah.

Did you graduate there?

Uh-huh.

What was that cousin's name?

Clara Pearson.

Then what did you do when you graduated high school?

I decided I was going to be a nurse, so I went to San Francisco and entered St. Joseph's Hospital there. I felt that I wasn't qualified for a nurse: I liked the work, but the pronunciation of these medical terms was just too much for me, so I said I was going to give it up. And my cousin was very disappointed. So then she said, "Well, will you try someplace else?" And so I said, yeah, I'd try in Salt Lake. So I did, and I was accepted, but I lied, because I said I had never applied at a nursing school before. So then, when the time came around, I said no, I wasn't going to go.

You didn't want to do that?

I didn't want to do that. I wanted to stay at the ranch.

Was it your cousins who were sponsoring your going? Is that why they were disappointed?

Yes, they paid my way.

So then did you go home to your home ranch?

Right.

Were you homesick for it when you were in California?

Yes and no. I mean, I adapted.

Tell me, when you went back were there any changes in the ranch and your family in the few years you'd been away? I know you'd been home summers, but when you came back to stay there.

Yes. You know, at first, we just used the horses to pull all the machinery, like in the haying. And then they got tractors and the horses weren't used as much any more to do the haying.

Uh-huh, more modernized.

Uh-huh, modernized, yeah.

Were your brothers still there, or had they gone?

No, they were there.

How were your mom and dad doing?

Oh, they were doing okay.

So did you just fit into the life again, and start doing the ranch work?

Right.

Now you were eighteen?

No, I was older, because I had skipped a few years in there. I was at least twenty-four or something like that.

So your role must have changed. What work were you doing now on the ranch when you were in your twenties?

Same. Just helping wherever help needed to be done.

What was your favorite part of ranching?

Riding horses.

Your face has a nice big grin! Did you have time to just ride horses for pleasure?

No, there was always something that had to be done.

Were your mom and dad in good health?

Yes, really, they were. I grew up without—there was never an aspirin in the house.

Oh my!

We never went to a doctor until I was going to high school.

Was there any medical care or health services near the ranch if you needed anything done?

No, we just took care of ourselves!

Where were the children born?

My oldest brother was born here in Austin. My other brother was born at the ranch, the same as I was.

Was there a hospital in Austin then?

There was, yes.

Did you come into Austin very much in that early period?

No.

When you came back from college, what year was that?

In 1933.

Had things changed? Like, were the roads starting to be paved by then?

No, they were still dusty roads.

Did your family own an automobile?

Yes, by that time.

Did they have one when you were still home?

Uh-huh, before I left for high school.

Did your brothers start driving when they were young?

Yes.

Where did they go to high school?

They didn't. They only had the eighth grade.

I see. So they stayed and ranched?

Uh-huh.

How long did your brothers stay on the ranch?

Until they sold the place.

They didn't go off and marry?

No.

Did they ever marry?

Well, after the ranch was sold and my mother and dad had passed away, the one brother had made contact with a Filipino

girl—in fact, I guess he put her through school—and anyway, he agreed that if she came over to America and she would marry him, he would go back with her. So that's what they did.

Did he ever meet her?

Yes, she came over, and they got married.

I mean, before he supported her through school?

No.

Alright, let's go back a little bit. You said when the ranch was sold—was that sold before your parents died?

No, it was after.

Which parent died first?

My dad.

And how old was he when he died?

Ninety-three.

Oh my goodness! That's a wonderful old age. And your mother?

Ninety-five.

They both lived wonderful, long lives. So then you three grown children were really grown-up adults when they died, right?

Uh-huh.

When you came back, and you were in your twenties, how many years were you on the ranch before they died?

I was married when I was twenty-six.

Oh, I see! We've got to talk about that.

And then, of course, after I was married, we moved away, you know.

Let's get to that, then. Where did you meet the man you were to marry?

He was a neighbor in Grass Valley. They had moved out from Cortez into Grass Valley about five miles from where I was.

Now, was your ranch in Grass Valley?

Uh-huh.

Okay. And what was your future husband's name?

Gerald Allen. His nickname was "Jimmy."

How long did you know him after he moved there?

Well, they moved out to the ranch when he was eight years old. And I was a year younger than he was.

So you knew him for many years.

Uh-huh.

Was he in your school?

Uh-huh, for just a month or two. They came up to the little one-room schoolhouse when they first moved out from Cortez. And then afterwards they put up a building, and they had their own teacher and their own school.

I see. And then you were away all through high school. When you came back from high school, was he living there then?

He was working out of Beowawe on a ranch.

Were you seeing each other?

Yeah, at dances, and of course when he came out to Grass Valley.

Tell me about the dances. Where were they?

That's when Cortez was booming, and we used to go in Saturdays.

How far was Cortez from your ranch?

Twenty miles.

And when you said "we used to go..."

My brothers and others in the valley—Bowmans, or some of the Allens.

Describe the dances.

They had musicians—a saxophone and a piano. They played dance music.

What kind of a hail was used for the dances?

Well, when Cortez was booming they had a big hail, good-sized building. It used to be just wherever there was a gathering, you know.

Can you describe Cortez, what it looked like, what the arrangements for living were like?

There were buildings and all kinds of people there. See, we had made a swimming

pool—that is, they just dug out the ground, and we had a swimming pool at the ranch, so there were always people coming swimming.

At the ranch, or at Cortez?

No, at the ranch.

So people from Cortez would come and swim?

Uh-huh, and they'd come out and have picnics. And then the neighbors around, the ranchers around, would come and have their swims, mostly Sundays.

So your ranch was kind of the gathering place?

Right.

And this is when you were about twenty-three, twenty-four?

Uh-huh.

Was your husband-to-be one of them that would come to all these things?

Right.

Were you starting then to go steady? Were you going steady by then?

No, just friends.

What kind of dancing did they do?

Waltzes and fox trots and square dances, like that, you know.

That must have been a lot of fun.

It was!

And were there refreshments? Did people bring food?

Not so much food. [chuckles] They had their drinks.

Did they have any alcoholic drinks?

Oh, yes.

Like what?

Whiskey and beer, wine.

Were there young people under age? Would they drink too? Like fourteen, fifteen, sixteen?

No, the young ones weren't really drinking.

Did people smoke a lot then?

Yes.

Did you smoke?

No, never.

Your husband?

Yes.

Uh-huh, because most people did. That sounds like a lot of fun. And at Cortez, about how many families lived at Cortez? Do you have just a general idea?

Oh, possibly around thirty.

And then were there a lot of single men who were there?

Yeah, more the family men.

More family men, would bring their families?

Uh-huh.

So their school might have had more kids than your ranch school would have.

Oh, yes, by that time! We didn't have a school any more.

They would transport the ranch [kids]?

Uh-huh. There's only up to the eighth grade, see. And then when I graduated the Bowmans moved the schoolhouse to their ranch, because they had younger children yet.

They had more children.

Uh-huh.

So now let's move into your courtship and marriage. What year was that, and how old were you when you and your husband decided to marry?

Well, I was twenty-six, and he was twenty-seven. We got married in June 1936.

Where did you marry? Tell me about your wedding.

In Elko. We went up to Elko and got married by the justice of the peace.

Did family members attend? Was it a wedding?

No.

Just the two of you?

Just the two of us. We had strangers standing up for us.

What did you mom and dad think when you were going to get married? Did they like your husband?

No, not exactly. They weren't too pleased.

So no one offered to say "let's have a wedding party"?

[laughs] No, I'm not the social person, so I didn't want one.

Okay. So you went up to Elko and married. Did you have any time for a honeymoon?

Yeah, we took a few days, and we went to Reno. Then Jimmy had some kinfolks down in Reno.

Had you met them before?

Oh, yes.

Did he have brothers and sisters?

Yes, there were eleven of them.

Oh my goodness! Did you know all of them?

Uh-huh.

Where did most of them live?

Oh, they were at the ranch, most of them. The older ones were out working, supporting the ones that were living at the ranch.

Now when you say "the ranch," you mean Jimmy's family's ranch?

Yes. When they moved from Cortez, they homesteaded a place out in the valley.

I see. So his father worked at Cortez?

Yes, he was the head blacksmith at Cortez.

You must have known his father, of course.

Yes.

Can you tell me a little bit about him and his work there? Do you know anything about it?

Well, he was a good blacksmith and he was a good drinking man! So that about tells the story! [laughs]

Did Jimmy work at the mine?

No, he was a truck driver.

A truck driver for the mine, or for ranching?

Both. He drove the stage from Beowawe to Cortez. Then he worked on ranches in Beowawe.

When you say "stage," there are all kinds of stages. What kind of stage was the one he drove?

To deliver the mail.

What kind of a vehicle was it?

It just depended on what the person had. At that time, I imagine it would be a Ford, Model A.

So they would just call it a stage.

Yeah, it wasn't really. It was just whatever vehicle that they had, they used.

And then where did you live after you married?

We moved to Austin.

And why?

Because he was working, driving truck for this kinfolk of his. They were hauling ore from Austin to Ely, to the mill over at Ely. And then after that, he went to work here as a hoistman at the mine.

Which mine?

Well, they called it the Silver.

In Austin?

In Austin.

Tell me, when you came here to live, what was Austin like? This was in the mid-thirties, 1936. What was it like then?

Well, there wasn't as many people. It's just like it is today, really.

You mean, less people then than now?

Yes.

What did the main street look like compared to today? Was the train still coming up?

Oh, well, the train came in just down at the end of the canyon.

Was it still coming from Battle Mountain?

Ah, yes, the first year, I think, when we were married. I think it stopped in that year, because I don't remember too much about it.

Were there more stores open than there are now, or less?

Yes, there could have been. And they had more hotels—not motels, but hotels.

Can you describe any? Do you have any vivid memories of any aspect of that?

Well, no. Just that they had their rooms upstairs, and you'd have to go upstairs, you know.

Was that for tourists or for transient workers?

Whoever needed a room.

Would it be people who'd be staying a while and working? Or just people driving through?

I think more people just driving through—maybe some of the workers.

Were there other stores? Was there a grocery store? Or a clothing store?

Yeah, there was a Good's Grocery Store—that is, meat market and everything. And they did try it with the clothing stores, but they never seemed to be satisfactory. People wouldn't trade there.

Where did you live when you first came? Did you rent a place, or buy a place?

Well we first moved to the motel.

Which one?

Down there at the Pony Canyon. And then afterwards we moved up into the motel—it's not there any more—across the street. And then we bought the little two-room house up from the International. Then we added an addition to it. They moved a building that

was down along the river. It was possibly a building that the railroad had used.

And what did you do, buy that building?

Yeah, we bought it, and then they moved it whole. It wasn't a very large place.

And what did you do, add it to yours?

Yeah, they backed it in and added it right to the two rooms that we had.

Was that when you had a child, you needed more room?

Yes.

And tell me about that.

Well, it was hard times at that time. The mine had closed and then there was no work except for the WPA, and that was only so many days a month.

What kind of work was that?

Well, wherever there was work needed. They just made work, the government made work.

Was your husband one of the workers?

Yes, he worked on that.

What kind of work?

Well, road work, and also where they built retaining walls so that there wasn't so much erosion.

Was that here in the Austin area?

No, possibly more in Eureka County.

But they would hire them from here?

Right. Well, or hired them wherever somebody was available that needed work. Then we worked at the ranch in between times.

Which ranch?

The Walti Ranch, where I was born. We worked there, and then when we went to Reno, we just barely had money to make a down payment to the doctor and the hospital.

Tell me the name of your baby, and when she was born.

Geraldine, and she was born on February 5, 1938.

And you had to go to Reno because there was no hospital here to deliver babies?

Right.

Did you get there in time?

Oh, yeah, we were there ahead of time.

So your parents were still on the ranch, and your brothers?

Uh-huh.

How long did you stay in Reno before you came home with your baby?

Well, I had a terrible time having the birth, and I had to stay longer. I was there two weeks, I think, after the baby was born. So then I

moved back, and then I had to pack water and heat the water on a wood/coal stove.

Oh my! Did they have inside plumbing?

No.

Not yet, here.

Uh-uh, outdoor privy.

Oh my! And where did you have to take the water from?

A well shed. That's before we moved the other little building in—there was a shed there and you had to pack the water into the house.

What was it? Water from a well?

Just the city water.

Was there a faucet?

Yeah.

How did you handle these hills?

[chuckles] Well, they didn't bother me too much.

Did you have a car that you could drive?

No, we walked mostly. It was a hard time in our lives.

Was your baby okay?

She was colicky. She believed in making the night into day and day into night.
[laughter]

Oh dear! [laughter] Did you make a lot of friends in Austin?

Ah, yes. Mainly friends with neighbors, and they were all older people.

Older people, because you were just young then.

Yeah.

Of course you were busy with the baby, but did you and your husband ever have any time for any more socializing? meeting with friends? or dances?

No, not during that time, until our daughter grew up and was in school and then they had the school dances. We didn't go to dances during that period, you know.

Too busy. The Depression was on then, right? So he had some work.

Uh-huh.

Did he come out of that Depression? Did he finally find some steady work so things weren't so hard?

Well, yes. Then he became a mechanic down here at Cassidy's. Then my brother found this float of turquoise. It's a rock that came off of the ledge where the turquoise was.

Where was that?

Out in Grass Valley, across the valley, west of the ranch. Then Jimmy and my brother went and traced this rock up to where the ledge was.

Did they stake a claim?

Uh-huh, made a claim. And then of course we started mining the turquoise.

Did they do that themselves? Did they know how to do that? Did everyone know how to do things like that?

Uh-huh. You know, when you're living out in the country, you learn all kinds of things to do. Jimmy had worked at a turquoise place: him and another fellow had leased some, so that he knew what it was.

Before you married?

No, no, that was afterwards.

And where was that?

It was over in Dry Creek.

So now they've found this and they staked it and they started to mine it. Did you go and help too?

Uh-huh.

With your baby?

Uh-huh.

Tell me about it, because not knowing anything about turquoise mining, describe a little bit of the kind of things you had to do to mine turquoise.

Well, first it just started in with a wheelbarrow and a pick and shovel. And they just moved over burden and got down to where there was some turquoise—it mostly was in a ledge. Well, first, I guess he made the hole with just a jackhammer and a drill, and then loaded it with powder and blasted

it. Afterwards, we got a compressor. And of course then that was easier.

What's a compressor?

It builds up air so that you can use it with a jackhammer to drill the holes. And then we just started mining, and then started selling.

Let's slow up a little bit. Did they find quite a lot of turquoise?

Yes, it was a good deposit.

Where would you sell it?

The buyers would come in from other places.

I saw on the little main street a store that had a sign "Turquoise." Was that yours?

Uh-uh.

How would they [the buyers] know to come?

I don't know, by the grapevine, I guess.

Where would they come?

A lot of them came from Mexico and Arizona.

Where would they come to buy it from you?

That's where they'd have their turquoise set up.

Okay, but you said then you started to sell your turquoise.

To them.

Right, but how would you sell it to them?

By the pound, so much a pound.

Right, but would it be through the mail?

No, they would be there personally.

They'd come to your mine?

Uh-huh, to where we had it, yeah.

Okay, to where the mine was. Did you have a place at the mine where it could be secured and safe?

We had a little trailer house.

Did you stay there?

Uh-huh.

So you lived there.

Uh-huh.

With your baby?

Uh-huh.

What happened to the house in Austin?

Well, we just left it. We went back and forth. We'd have to come back and get groceries.

So that was you, your husband, your baby, and then your brother?

No, just the three of us, the baby and my husband and me.

But wasn't it your brothers' too?

Yeah. When we took up the claim, we included the two brothers, so it was half-and-half-half was theirs. So then when we had our expenses paid for, then we divided what we'd made with them, see. Half was theirs and half was ours. And then afterwards we bought them out.

So you bought them out. How many years are we talking about that you were busy with the turquoise mine?

Well, we found it in 1939 and then I think we worked it during 1940. And then the war came along, and they were drafting people, and then we went to work at a ranch out of Yerington. So we had some turquoise mined at the time, and we took it with us. We would sell it through the post office.

Okay, let's go back to the mine now. You're mining turquoise and you're selling it. They knew, by word of mouth, and they'd come to your trailer?

Uh-huh.

Was all the turquoise that you'd find in the trailer?

No.

How did it work?

It was sold by the pound. At first we got five dollars for it, and then of course we raised the price on it, because the turquoise got better and the demand got better. And then they'd order through the mail. We'd put it through the post office and send it to them.

In other words, you'd weigh it and package it?

Uh-huh.

You billed them?

Uh-huh.

Did they pay you? You didn't have any trouble?

Most of them. Well, a lot of them didn't—most of them did.

Anyone try to bother you to steal any out of the mine. [Did you have] any problems like that?

Not in the early years.

Was that profitable?

Yes, very much so.

Did you keep any of that turquoise?

Well, sort of a little of it, but not as much as we should have.

And your little girl was there. How old was she when you were doing this?

She was just a baby. Then she just grew up out there and we worked in the summertimes until she had to go to school. Then we moved back to town and Jimmy got his job as a mechanic down at Cassidy's. And then from there he went into the State as a mechanic, and he worked up to be supervisor.

Oh, wow!

He had had a stroke—well, he had twenty years in, and he had a stroke, and then he had to quit.

Oh dear! Now, while he was doing all those other kinds of work, did you also, weekends, keep the mine?

Uh-huh.

So you kind of had several things, then, which made things a little better for you?

Uh-huh.

Now tell me a little bit about your little girl. She went to school here in Austin?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about her.

Well, of course until school age, she was out at the mine. We had a pony and I had a horse. We would ride to a certain extent, and then we had friends come out and stay with us.

Do you have pictures of both of you on the pony and horse, I hope?

Yeah. [laughs]

I'd like to look at some later. What kind of a little girl was she? Was she tomboyish?

She just seemed to fit in, wherever. She was a happy child. And then of course, you know, we went over to the ranch a lot and we had the swimming pond there. And we had to haul our water, because there was no water. So there was always something that we had to go do this or do that or come to town. It wasn't just being there [at the mine] all the time.

You said, I believe, one brother married later, but while your parents were alive they were not married, is that right?

That's right.

Did your little daughter bring a lot of joy to your mom, dad, and brothers?

Well, I don't know. I don't know, not exactly. It just "fit in," you know, with whatever, however.

Did she ever stay on the ranch without you?

Uh-uh.

Did she help around on the ranch when you were there?

No, not that much. It was just more just she wanted to do, you know, play—she had her playthings.

So then she went to school here in Austin. What were the schools here like when she started school?

They were good, they had good teachers.

Was Essie Strickland a teacher yet?

Not for her. She was after that.

What year did your husband die?

In 1977.

So what changes did you see in Austin over that period? You moved here in the mid to late thirties. What kind of changes here in Austin did you see over that period?

Oh, I don't know. You know, I didn't really pay too much attention to it. It was just like it is today. You know, different places would change ownership.

Did new people come in?

Well, some, yes. Some new people would come in, and then others would leave. I can't really say. I didn't partake much of the town's doings—I'm not a social person.

You were busy with the mine and the ranch.

Just busy with my house and own family.

As your husband was getting ill, how did you handle the medical treatment since there wasn't too much medical care in Austin?

We had to go to Fallon or Reno or Elko to the doctors.

Did that become an inconvenience or a hardship?

No, not really. It's just something you have to do, what you have to do.

Was there ever an emergency when it was hard to reach a doctor because of the time to travel?

Well, there was never anything that turned into an emergency, no.

Did it make it more expensive for you as a family because there wasn't a nearby clinic or medical attention.

Yeah, but you know, when you grew up out on the ranch, you just had to get by with what you had. And what you didn't have, you went without, you know. It isn't like it is today. Well, now they require everything that all you have to do is push a button! [chuckles] You know, they don't figure that they have to *do* anything anymore, like, you know, when I was growing up at the ranch, we had to wash

the clothes by a washboard and wring out the clothes by hand, and then hang them on the line. You know, there were no washing machines!

Or dryers! Or dishwashers!

Or dryers or dishwashers! So you know, you just got used to doing what you had to do.

When you were living on the ranch, I know in the early period, there wouldn't have been telephones.

No!

So communications were difficult.

I used to go up to the neighbors on horseback, and my mother would write a note to a friend, and she would write a note, and we were packing notes back and forth. Or I'd have to go up and get a starter of yeast. You know, we didn't have Fleischmann's yeast, or the dry yeast. We had it in cakes. And you had to make your own yeast, you know, out of potatoes, and this dry yeast. So then the yeast wouldn't start, so I'd have to go up and get a starter of yeast.

And how long would it take you?

Well, an hour.

Oh my! What about if it was snowy or rainy?

Well, then I guess maybe we didn't go! We went according to whatever was, you know, going. You know, you'd get out in a snow storm, and you didn't mind it.

Uh-huh, you were used to it. Tell me how you got your mail.

Well, it would come from Beowawe to Cortez when Cortez was booming. Then whoever neighbor went into Cortez would bring the mail out for all the other people.

And then when you had to mail [something], you'd take it to Cortez? Did you go on a horse?

I have gone, yeah, on a horse. Of course, you know, in the really early days, it was buggies—you had to go with a buggy.

With a horse and buggy?

With a horse and buggy.

Where did you go to get your supplies, or shopping that you would have to do?

Well, in the real early days, my dad took four horses and a wagon, and he went to Beowawe, and it took him four days—two days to go, and two days to come back. And they shipped—they had, this here Winestock Lubbins place. They would send the order ahead, and then it would come in on the train.

Oh, when the train came from Battle Mountain? Where was this Winestock and Lubbins?

In California, Sacramento. My dad would send the order through the mail.

What kind of things would he order?

It was flour and salt and sugar and dry fruit. We didn't buy too much canned stuff, because we raised a garden and had fresh vegetables. And then stored it in the wintertime.

Did he ever have to order tools or parts for the farm equipment?

I imagine so, but I don't remember too much about that.

What about your clothes and shoes?

We sent that all through the mail order too.

Mail order to?

Well, Montgomery Ward or Sears Roebuck. I guess if they went to town, they would buy whatever we needed.

You mean to Austin? What town?

It'd have to be Elko, I guess. But anyway, he'd go twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. And that's when I was real small.

Did you ever go with him?

No.

Did any of the boys ever go with him?

Uh-uh.

Your mama ever go?

Uh-uh.

No, he'd go himself.

Uh-huh, because that was a four-day trip.

There was too much work on the ranch?

Right.

Was it always exciting when he came back?

Yeah, I guess so! [laughs]

SA Did he ever bring you any treats? A little candy?

Oh, I guess. Yes, he brought candy, and that would be that rock-hard candy.

Oh yeah, rock candy.

Yeah! I think that's the only kind there was. And then of course, Mother made candy. She made her own candy.

Oh! Did she make fudge?

Yeah. Different, you know. We had homemade things, but most of them not boughten.

Would you help make those?

Yeah, when I was home.

Did your brothers do anything in the house? Or was that women's work?

Mostly women's work, until in the later years.

What were your brothers like? Were they quiet?

They were the opposite. One was kind of secretive and didn't communicate too good, and the other brother was more open and very thoughtful. But I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe!

So your brothers were William and Emil. Which one was it that started to communicate with the young girl from the Philippines? And how did that start?

William. Through a missionary that was over in the Philippines, and then he came over

into America, the United States, and told my brother about it, I guess. I don't know, I didn't know anything about it until possibly about a month before she came over.

Now, is he still alive?

I haven't heard from him since November.

Before that, when he brought this young woman over and they married, where did they live?

In Elko.

Did it turn out to be good?

I guess they thought so!

You didn't see each other too much?

No.

So then your mom and dad got ill. Who took care of them?

My younger brother.

He stayed right there. He was the one that never left.

Yeah, and he was very good in the house and did a lot of cooking and cleaning for my mother. Of course I went out all the time and helped too.

Yes. They were lucky to have good children, in a sense, and live such a long life. So when they died, the ranch was sold. Who was it sold to?

George Gunn.

Then what did your brother, Emil, do?

He just took care of the home and mother. My dad died first, and then they moved back out to the ranch again after my dad died.

Where were they living? You said "moved back to the ranch."

In Elko.

In other words, they had gone to Elko during their illness?

My brother had bought a place up in Elko, so that whenever they wanted to, they could go up.

Near the doctors?

Yeah. They were church-goers, so they went up to Elko, you know, and would go to church.

Did they stay in Elko, or go up and back to the ranch?

No, just up and back, unless they didn't feel good.

So then he was taking care of the ranch alone, and them?

Uh-huh.

And then after your mother died, how long after that did everyone sell the ranch?

I guess they sold the ranch before my mother died. I'm terrible about remembering years.

That's okay. Did Emil arrange for the selling of it, or was it the three of you?

No, they had bought me out a few years after I was married.

I see. So the two boys shared?

Yeah, it was just the two brothers and my mother and dad. They had it in a joint account, you know, so when one passed on it automatically went to the living people.

I see. Is Emil still alive?

No, no, he passed away.

And never married?

No, he never married.

Did William and his wife have children?

No. Well, he was just a little bit old and she was quite young. But they did adopt two of them. But that was just more in the recent, and I didn't really know too much about that.

Now, as your daughter was growing up, she went through eighth grade here at the school?

High school.

Oh, the high school was here then?

Uh-huh.

What was her life here as a young girl going into teens? What did kids do here at that age?

Get into mischief!

[laughs] Like what? What did teenagers do in Austin?

Oh, they'd try to get a oar and buzz around.

Buzz around where?

Around the streets.

The hills? Did they like to go up around the hills?

[laughs] Yeah. Oh, gosh, I don't know, just what teenagers do—they get into trouble.

Were there any activities for them? I see there was a youth center.

Oh that's just recent.

What about the schools? Did they have activities for kids?

Oh, there was basketball, and like that, you know. And they'd go on trips, play other places. But no, there wasn't too much. They didn't have too much social.

No theaters?

Yeah, we did.

Dances?

Oh yeah, they had dances—they had their school dances. And we had a *nice* theater here, but it didn't pay them, and they stopped. And then, of course, TV came in later.

I read in some of my research on Austin that this is kind of a rare town in Nevada because they voted that there could not be any prostitution houses or certain kinds of gambling in Austin. Were you living here when all that was taken up and voted on?

[laughs] I don't really remember.

That's kind of rare because gambling is legal in Nevada and it's legal to have houses for prostitution. But this is a rare little area because there were enough people to vote "not here!" You don't remember that?

No.

You may have been on the ranch, or not lived here yet. Maybe it was before?

Yeah, but I didn't really partake in too much. I'm kind of a homebody.

Were you at all aware or involved with the long battle of Battle Mountain voting to move the county seat to Battle Mountain? Personally, do you know anything about that?

[laughs] No, I'd rather not make any comment.

That's okay. Tell us what things other than the horses that you and your family liked to do together.

Well, we went fishing.

Where?

At the different little streams around—Schull Creek, Steiner Creek, and out to Big Creek, Tonkin Creek.

Did your daughter fish too?

Oh yes. We were all very enthused about catching the biggest one, losing the biggest one! [laughter]

That brought you some nice meals!

Yes. A lot of times we had a family go-together. We didn't camp out, but we had a meal out, cooked on the campfire.

Oh, out by the creeks where you fished?

Yeah, on the creeks.

Oh, what fun! I understand there was ice skating in the winter. Did you do that?

Yes, we done that. At one time, it seemed like everybody was going ice skating, and they'd take tires down and burn the tires and warm up and then ice skate. Oh, it was so much fun! And then they even had a ski lift here.

Really?! Where was that?

Up on the hill here.

Back of the park? Which hill?

Up further. Up there where the water tank is, up on that side, on the hill, we had a ski lift. And then us "old people" went skiing, and the young ones watched! [laughs]

Oh you're kidding! I wonder if there are any pictures of that. I've not seen anything like that.

No. Both Jimmy and myself—and of course the daughter too—were more interested in outdoor sports.

Did you go hunting?

I went hunting, but I wasn't a hunter.

Was Jimmy?

Yes.

What did he hunt?

Deer.

Where would he hunt?

Out in Grass Valley, in the mountains out in Grass Valley. Oh yeah, we enjoyed that. I went along, but I didn't really care about shooting, but I always packed a rifle so in case the game warden came along, I had a tag.

Did you have to cut up or clean or skin the deer?

No, that was always the men's work. No, I didn't do that.

Did you swim?

Yes. We used to have great times swimming, both there, and then we went down to Spencer Hot Springs. After you go up past the Austin Summit, Bob Scott Summit, they had a swimming pool out there called the Spencer Hot Springs. And they built a pool there, and oh, it was great for swimming. So we went for swimming a lot.

That sounds like fun. Now, you're living in a house that is not the one you first described. Tell me when the move was made.

Possibly about 1949.

How did that come about?

Well, we just needed more room, and we had the money that we could invest into a different place. We just wanted more space.

Did you sell the other place?

Not right away, no. It was afterwards. Jimmy's sister bought it, and then it eventually ended up in Doc's name.

That's Jimmy's brother?

Uh-huh, Clarence.

Okay, I'll find out more from him this afternoon. When did Clarence and his wife buy your place?

He *has* been married, but he isn't married at present.

Okay, but they bought your old place.

Yeah. Got it from Lottie—that would be the sister.

Okay, the sister. Did you interact with them when all of you lived here? Did you socialize with them?

No, not too much.

Okay, so then you moved here. Tell me about your daughter as she was growing up. What did she do after she got out of high school?

Oh, she got married.

Right away?

Uh-huh. [laughs] The day after she graduated!

Now wait a minute: Going through high school, did she find one fellow early?

They came in on the survey crew—a group of boys, from California. And she got acquainted with him.

What's his name?

Dean Mills. She was sixteen at the time. And of course they decided they wanted to get married, and I said "No way!" I said, "You finish your school, and then you can get married."

Did he go back to California?

Uh-huh.

Did they correspond?

Uh-huh, to a certain extent. Then he'd come up, you know, some. So then he came up for her graduation, and then the next day, we took off. She went with him, and we took off and went to Las Vegas. And we stayed there one night, and then the next day they got married in a little church.

No way to discourage them?

Well, I guess I could of, at that time, because she wasn't quite so sure how everything was going to be. You know, after being down there and realizing, I guess, that she wasn't going to have her parents anymore...I think I could have, but I didn't, really, because I figured, "Well, it's her life." So anyway, then they took off for California, Bakersfield.

Did he have a job?

Kind of a "hit and miss." So her earlier years were a little bit hard, too, I think, but she's still with him.

Did she stay close with you, through mail and calls?

Yeah.

Have you seen her a lot?

Yeah.

Are there any children?

Yeah, she has three girls, and then the two girls are mated, and each one has two children.

Where is your daughter living now?

Bakersfield, California.

Do they come see you?

They haven't, for several years. But, you know, after all, they're no further than it is to the telephone.

That's right, now that there are telephones! [laughter] Do you like him?

Oh yeah, he's a good-enough guy. We have had our differences, but that's natural.

Sure.

Anyway, he'd kind of a workaholic.

What's his work?

He was a plumber and a carpenter. And then he retired early from that work. Now he's busier than he ever was, doing plumbing.

Did she ever start any kind of career?

Uh-uh, no. She's his bookkeeper now. So that's enough.

And with the three children. Now, let's get back to you and Jimmy. When did he start not feeling good?

Oh, it was several years. He had cardiovascular problems. It was several years that he wasn't feeling good. And then he got a slight stroke.

How old was he then?

Well, it must have been about two years before he passed away.

How old was he?

Sixty-eight.

Oh, young! Were you living in this house?

Uh-huh.

And you had to take him...

One morning he didn't feel good. Well, I didn't really call the ambulance right away, so I got scolded out for that! He was complaining of a pain in his left arm and his chest, so then I called the ambulance, and it took a while before I got it. Anyway, he passed away very peacefully, very calmly, on the way to Battle Mountain. The Battle Mountain doctor and ambulance had come out.

There wasn't much that they could do?

No, there was nothing they could do anymore.

So then what was your life like after he died?

Oh, lonesome and miserable, and tried to do too much. And then I crippled up myself! [laughs]

Oh, how'd you do that?

Oh, by arthritis. I've had arthritis. It's no fun.

No! Well, you wouldn't have anywhere else you'd want to go. Where would you go, California?

I don't like cities. I like it here, as long as I can get around.

As long as you're all right. Are you alone?

Uh-huh.

Do you have any support?

Friends.

Close people?

Yes, but you know, that's hard.

Sure, you don't like to pick up the phone.

It's hard. They have their own families, they have their own lives.

Yes. Do all of your grandkids live far?

They're all in Bakersfield.

Have you ever gone to Bakersfield?

Oh yes, we used to go down. When the children were smaller, we went down. And then it got to be kind of a struggle, you know. My husband didn't exactly like to drive in traffic.

I don't blame him! [laughs]

And then they'd come up. When the children were smaller, they came up. And

then we went out to the turquoise. You know, it was all fun.

Did your daughter miss the open country of Nevada?

No.

She took to the new life?

She liked being dressed up.

Oh, a "city gal," right?

More or less.

Did she start having her children young, or did she have a few years to develop her own person?

Well, I guess not right away, but it was soon, when she had her children. Oh, you know, when you have children, you make the change.

Of course!

There's hardships that come up that you never even think about.

Of course. Now tell me again—you've been alone for a long time—what are special interests of yours? How do you devote most of your time? You can't go hunting and horseback riding.

Oh, yes! Horseback riding is still my biggest interest.

Did you have a horse here?

Oh yeah.

How long did you ride your horse?

Oh, I've been riding, except lately. I got a blood clot, and I can't ride.

Oh, so you've kept on riding! You own a horse?

Oh yes! Oh, I own three of them!

Three of them! I have to go out and get a picture of you with them this morning. Where would you go riding? So many beautiful places.

Just around.

Did you have anyone else riding with you? Or just you alone?

Oh yes, others.

Who?

Friends.

Here?

Uh-huh.

Women?

Uh-huh. Kids.

That's wonderful! Do you have a garden?

No, I used to, but I can't do that anymore.

So when you can't ride the horse, and it's raining or snowing, what are some of the things that you really enjoy?

Well, I can enjoy myself in anything—TV or reading or whatever.

Good! What do you see as the future—let's say in ten years—of Austin?

Going downhill!

Are enough new people coming in to keep it going, after all the pioneers and people who've lived here all their lives?

I just don't know.

Do you think there'll be any mining bursting again?

Who knows?! Who knows about all the gold that's been in Nevada, that they *have* discovered? And of course the prospectors, I guess, *knew* there was some, but there was never enough to make it worth their while to mine it.

Yeah, to mine it, until the big companies came in.

The big companies, yeah. So who knows what'll happen? I can't predict anything.

Do you have any vision, or dreams of going anywhere else? I don't mean leaving your home, but of spending any time in Bakersfield or other parts of Nevada?

Oh, I like to go and see country—parks and things like that. But then I have a problem again. I can't go by myself So, you know, just have to go from day to day.

Not a little group of ladies who say, "Let's go take a train ride"? [laughter]

Well, you know, everybody has their own things that they like. And if you go with someone, it has to be compatible or it's not enjoyable.

Right. I thought the most beautiful drive was coming from Battle Mountain to Austin, and closer to Austin is gorgeous. Is that where you horseback ride sometimes?

Oh, I just ride around out of Austin. Sometimes we take a trailer and ride out in the canyons or something like that. Horses have been my life ever since I can remember. But, I don't know what the future is going to hold.

Is there anything else that you can share before we end this interview? And then I want to go see your horses and get a picture of you.

Okay.

So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I thank you for sharing your recollections and your life with us.

Thank you, and you're more than welcome!

This is the end of the interview.

ELSIE ALLEN
PHOTOGRAPHS



ELSIE ALLEN
JUNE 18, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Elsie Walti Allen and her Dad, Fritz Walti at Grass Valley, Walti Hot Springs.

(Original photograph owned by Elsie Allen)

ELSIE ALLEN
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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GEORGE ANCHO**PREFACE**

George Ancho's father, Jose Ancho, was born in Navarra, Spain. He came to the United States when he was sixteen to herd sheep for W. T. Jenkins Company, the largest sheep company in Lander County at that time. The Jenkins Company recruited Basque shepherders because they were used to the isolation of sheepherding. The opportunity to make a better living than they could in their homeland lured many to the region. Jose Ancho worked for the Jenkins Company forty to fifty years, becoming ranch manager at several of the Jenkins' ranches.

George Ancho's mother, Dominga Urriolabietia, was born in Bilbao, Spain and came to Jack Creek, Nevada with a contract to work for a family there. Jose and Dominga met and married. George Ancho was born at the Martin Ranch in 1938, where he lived until they moved to Battle Mountain so he could go to high school. He grew up with four brothers and sisters, and briefly describes ranch life and school days.

The main reason George Ancho was selected to be interviewed for this project was his twenty-six years with Duval Mining Corporation. Duval geologists visited Battle Mountain for the first time in 1963 and were excited about the prospects of the gold in this region. George was in charge of hiring personnel from January 1966 until his retirement the end of July 1992. He gives us excellent details on attracting a work force during a period when there was a small labor force in the Battle Mountain region.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing George Ancho at his home, at 195 West Second Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on March 16, 1993.

Good morning, George. First I want to ask you your name, and tell us where and when you were born.

George Ancho: My name is George Ancho. I was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada, February 5, 1938.

Can you tell me your parents' names and where they were born?

My father's name was Jose Ancho, and he was born in Navarra, Spain. That's a province in Spain. And my mother's name was Dominga Urriolabietia, and she was born in Bilbao, Spain.

Can you tell me what brought them here from Spain and when they came? Where did they first come to when they left Spain?

My father came from Spain when he was sixteen years old, on a contract to herd sheep for W.T. Jenkins Company. I don't recall the date. My mother came shortly after that. She had a contract with, I think the Saval family. And she came to Jack Creek, Nevada, which is out of Elko.

How did your father and mother meet, and when did they marry?

I don't recall the date that they married. I think my dad, going through the area with sheep at that time, stopped at that location, and they met.

Did your father tell you about the kind of days he spent when he first came working for the Jenkins Company, what his work was like, and how long he stayed out in the open ranges?

I don't recall how long he stayed out in the open ranges. He did tell me how tough it was, you know, with being a young gentleman his age, living with a burro and the sheep, and the tent and so forth. But no, I don't recall.

How old was he, and for how many years did he work for Jenkins?

I think he worked for Jenkins Company maybe forty to fifty years, in there sometime.

How old was he when he started?

I think sixteen years old sticks in my mind. He may have been older, he may have been nineteen, I don't recall.

When he worked for the Jenkins Company, did he always work out in the ranges with the sheep? Or what were some of his responsibilities?

Later on in life, he became...oh, I guess you would call him a ranch manager for Jenkins Company. Jenkins Company had numerous ranches in the area. I think the first ranch he managed was the Rock Creek Ranch, which is north of town. And then he worked at the Martin Ranch, and that's where I was born, when he was working at the Martin Ranch for a good many years.

Where is the Martin Ranch?

It's ten miles east of Battle Mountain, at the foot of Lewis Canyon.

Is that still there?

Yes, it's Tomera Ranch now.

Tell me the earliest recollections that you have as a child. Were you living on the ranch for most of your childhood?

Yes, I was. I *did* live on the ranch...I think my parents bought a house when I was in the eighth grade and we moved to town to go to

high school. But all the years prior to that, I lived at the Martin Ranch.

Well, think back, and see if you can think of any typical day that may not seem unusual to you, but would be to us.

A typical day was just a day full of fun and things to do on a ranch with animals and so forth. I do recall that I never saw a movie until I was ten years old—we never came to town. My sister drove my brother and I to town. Then when school was out, we went back to the ranch and we stayed on the ranch.

Tell me the names of your brothers and sisters and a little bit about the chores—if you had chores—on the ranch.

I have two brothers, Tony Ancho and Joe Ancho, and two sisters, Mary and Frances. And the chores were just anything that came up. We fed chickens, we went with our dad and fed cows, we milked cows. We did everything that you normally do on a ranch.

Well, some of us city folks have never lived on a ranch, and a lot of children will be wanting to learn about an early period that they haven't experienced. What time did you have to get up? did you have a lot of recreation time? or did you have certain seasons when you worked harder?

Well, we got up early in the morning. And of course most of the time we had to be in school. I don't recall what time we had to be in school, but it was about a fifteen-minute drive to school every morning. And then as soon as school was out, we went back home. And at that time, we never had electricity or indoor plumbing or anything at that time, so when darkness came, we went to bed.

About how many families lived in that area, and how many students in the school?

In Battle Mountain?

No, I want to go back to the ranch days.

Oh, the ranch is only ten miles out of town, so we came to school in Battle Mountain. And the only family that lived on the ranch was our family.

Okay, I didn't realize that. Did you go to school in the building that is now the Courthouse [315 South Humboldt]?

It was the Eliza Pierce School, yes.

Okay, so then tell me a typical school day and about how many students were in your class.

[chuckles] A typical school day was learning the three R's. And then of course, the thing I remember different from when I was a student, and my children when they went to school, was the areas of discipline that were prevalent at that time, that don't exist now. I mean, when you got in trouble, you got the stick—when you get the ruler over your fingers or something—you just didn't do those things again.

How many students were in your classes?

I think they were relatively small—maybe ten or fifteen. I think when I graduated from high school there was only forty-three students in the high school. I *do* remember that figure, but I don't remember the grade school figure.

Was Eliza Pierce a teacher during your school days?

Yes, she taught me first and second grade.

I've heard her name, and of course the school is named after her. Do you remember anything about her?

No, just that she was a very nice person, but she was very strict, and you either did what she told you to do, or you got in trouble. Very good woman.

Did you have recess and playtime?

Yes, we did have recess and playtime.

What did you do at playtime?

[laughs] I think we had swings and merry-go-rounds, and we spent most of the time, you know, in children's games on that type of equipment.

Did they have a school cafeteria, or did you bring lunch?

They had a school cafeteria for students, basically that came from the ranches and the mining areas if from out of town. They had a cafeteria, and I don't recall whether other students could pay and eat there or not—I don't recall that.

What do you remember of Battle Mountain when you first moved here and during your teen years?

It was just a basic, small, rural community and families were all close—you knew everybody. We had numerous activities. We were, you know, completely different from what kids have to go through now. I mean, the years I was in high school, I think there were only possibly three students with automobiles—the

rest of us walked every place. So that minimized the trouble we could get into.

Did you have bicycles?

Yes, everybody had bicycles.

What were some of the recreational activities during your junior high and high school years?

In the community, or school activities?

Your personal activities with your own peers.

Well, basically, we had athletic programs that took up most of our time.

What kind of athletics?

We played basketball and track. And then when high school came, we had basketball, football, and track, and that took up most of our time. And then we had a movie house in Battle Mountain that had movies every night but one night a week, I think, and that's where we spent the evenings. And back at that time the community had a curfew that was set at 10:30, and when the curfew went off, you went home, or you were in trouble!

Did you participate in dances?

We had dances, we had Tuesday night socials. Sometimes the school sponsored them, sometimes they were done through local churches. Yes, we had dances.

Did you start hunting and fishing as a young boy?

Very young, yes. We started hunting birds and deer I guess when I was fourteen years old, or so.

Was it your father who taught you, or how did you get started in that?

My brother. My father didn't go hunting.

How much older is your brother than you?

My next oldest brother, Tony, is four years older than I am.

What kind of game or animals did you hunt, or go out to find and shoot?

Basically, the only big game at that time in the area was deer. And then birds were sage chickens and pheasants and then we had some quail and partridge until the introduction of chukar partridges, and then that was later on, which we hunted all the time.

As you started to get through high school, did you become interested in any specific areas of your classes or areas of work that you might want to pursue, or what were the kinds of things that you enjoyed the most?

I graduated through high school just with a general aptitude, just to get out of high school. I did have fairly good grades, so I went on to the University of Nevada [Reno]. And at that time, I was going to become an engineer. I changed my mind and went into the field of education.

Is that what you got your degree in?

Yes.

Did you then teach?

No, I then went to the Army, and then I came back from the Army and I went working construction and I got married. And then I

came back to Battle Mountain and there was a new mine going in the area, and I applied for a job. I went to work in human resources, and I spent twenty-seven years there almost.

Let's back up just a little bit. I want to know, during the war period, about when you left: did you enlist? were you drafted? and what was the atmosphere in Battle Mountain at that time when a lot of young men were going off to war?

Well, at the time I went to the Army, it was during the end of the Berlin Crisis, of course, and I spent my two years. And then at the end of the two years, the Cuba Crisis came and Vietnam was just starting, but I was discharged before that time. And most of my peers had already been in the Army and were out when I went in, because I was going to college, and most of them weren't in college at the time.

Did the young people—your peers—when they went off to college, go off to other parts of the United States to work, or did many come back here as you did?

Oh, I think the ones that went to college, probably half of them went on someplace else, and half of them came back. Probably more of them were someplace else and came back to the community.

Now, when you got married, did you establish a home here? and where did you meet your wife?

I met my wife...She was the daughter of Harry Bishop, who at that time owned what is known as the Old Cortez Gold Mining Company. And his father and her father were the ones that started the mine. I met her in college, and then after I came back from the Army, she was in the area, so we dated and

then got married in Reno. I was working in Reno at the time—both of us were.

You both were working in Reno when you married?

She was working for the Nevada State Highway Department and I was working construction.

How long did you both live in Reno?

Approximately two or three years.

Tell me what brought you back. I know you said you went to work for the mines, but tell me what brought you back and start telling me a little bit about that job.

We were married in Reno, and the construction was on a low turn, so I came to Battle Mountain and I had an employment offer with Duval Mining Company, and I came to work for them. And my wife's parents lived here, and my mother still was alive at the time, so we moved back to Battle Mountain. And then I began working at Duval Corporation in human resources, and of course it was a time when they were just beginning and Battle Mountain at that time had a very small labor market. So the hiring was interesting. We hired most of the local people that were in the force, and then we started hiring transient people who were going through, and it was real turmoil for about, oh, five or ten years before the work force became stable.

Can you tell me what year you started hiring and getting involved in that job?

This was in January of 1966.

I'd like to know, in as much detail as you can give us, where the people came from that you hired that were transients? which ones stayed? how long did the ones that came work here? and a little more in detail about that, because I think that is something that is unique to the changes in Battle Mountain.

At that time, when the mine started, they were putting in the freeway. And at the time that the freeway jobs were completed, a lot of those employees stayed in Battle Mountain and went to work for Duval Corporation. Most of those people were from Idaho, and some of those people are still here. And then from there, people came from Elko and Winnemucca. And then as time went on, we received a *real* influx of people that were, you know, good employees that stayed, when we had lumber problems in northern California, from McCloud, Redding, and that area. We had a lot of employees come down from that time. And then also from the shutdown of the lumber mills in Burns, Oregon, in that area. They've stayed, and basically that's what the work force is. And then, of course, as Battle Mountain grew, then the younger generations that didn't go to school, a lot of them went to work in the mines. That's where the work force came from.

How old were these workers when they first came to start in that mine?

Well, most of them were young, because back at that time, the company had an age restriction that if you were over forty-two years old, you couldn't be hired.

Was that because of their physical abilities?

I don't recall the reason why. And also at that time, the corporation did not have a

woman working for them. It was just the old antiquated way that companies thought of back at that time.

Was there a union?

Yes, Operating Engineers Local #3. As soon as the mine started, most of the employees, see, they were working on the construction jobs, worked for the Operating Engineers. And so when they went to work for Duval Corporation, then they were all in the union, so then they became unionized. And they've been unionized ever since. Still Local #3.

Is that company still in existence?

Duval Corporation was in existence until roughly...1985. And it was a subsidiary of Pennzoil Corporation. And Pennzoil went out of the mining business, so all the copper mines and so forth in Arizona were sold. But Battle Mountain Gold had converted and they were going into gold—from copper to gold—and at that time, they spun this Battle Mountain Gold Company off as their own entity. So then it became Battle Mountain Gold Company, which it is today.

Let's go back again to your job, and tell me, did you stay in the same position? were you in charge of personnel?

Yes, all those years. Basically just different titles, but I just stayed in personnel.

Were there periods when the mines were slow, and then other periods when they speeded-up hiring?

There were times...Yes, the last four or five years, Battle Mountain Gold has done

minimal hiring, but there were times in the early years, where we could not attract people to move, to come to Battle Mountain. So we gave incentives, and we sent recruiters, and we went all over the neighboring states and *paid* people to come to Battle Mountain to go to work. We built a trailer park, which is over here. Housing was a real problem, so we built our own trailer park. And slowly we had a work force that we could operate.

Did many of them leave because they found the work unsatisfactory or too hard? What was the kind of percentage that didn't last very long?

Oh, I think it's like anything else: you're looking at maybe 5-10 percent of the people who wanted to keep moving, and a lot of them were that type of people. But the main reason why people left Battle Mountain was the community: facilities at that time, we didn't have a doctor, shopping and housing, you know, you couldn't afford to build a house. That was the major, major reason people gave to leave, was the community.

Would that be when these young men might want to get married and start a family?

No, most of the people already were married and had families, but they didn't have any recreation in the area, so they wanted to go to a bigger community.

Did the economics of Battle Mountain change a lot with the people coming in and leaving? And what was happening? Were there big drops in population from these workers? Or was it pretty steady?

No, it was steady. There was never a *big* drop. At that time that this gold mine was here, Battle Mountain was known as the

“Barite Capital of the United States”—barite being a type of ore that is used for drilling mud and medicine and so forth. And at that time, there was one, two, I think something like five barium companies that were in business at the same time. So Battle Mountain had a real economic base at that time.

Was there a period of depression here, in your time?

Since I moved back to Battle Mountain, no.

That’s wonderful! Do you have any personal recollections of the influence of the railroad, or is that too early?

That’s too early for me.

You’re just used to the railroad being here?

Yes. I have a vague recollection when they shut down the old Nevada Central between Battle Mountain and Austin.

When the highway was paved, that must have brought a big increase of people driving through. Did that also make it easier for people to come here to work, because they could get away, over to Winnemucca, easier, for some entertainment?

I think so, yes. The freeway was an asset to get people in and to give them the ability to go to other communities. But I think—I’m not aware—but I’m sure that the business people on Main Street and so forth were affected economically.

I know you have a small commercial airport. Did that help when some of the mining people came, or business people who had to get around

on business—did that help bring more people in, that weren’t so dissatisfied?

I don’t think that the airport had an affect on the *working* people. It was convenient for the companies to bring the company planes in and so forth. But not for just the working people, no.

And how long did you work for the company? When did you leave?

I left in July—the end of July 1992.

Very, very recent! And I understand in the last decade there’s been a lot of new types of mining which have brought companies in. Can you tell me about those, that new increase in activity and how that’s affected the city?

At one time when we were in the gold mining, in the area, when we started, I think basically there were three major gold min two in Elko and one in Battle Mountain. Now you have gold min you have two in Battle Mountain and a third one going in, and you must have twenty or thirty in the outlying areas—due to the technology to mine microscopic gold.

Do you have any idea of the population increases in the last decade?

No, I don’t have that information.

I’m interested, in wandering around town, there seems to be a population of Mexicans who speak Spanish, and I’m curious when they came and what brought them here, since you’re so far from the border. Where I live [San Diego], of course, we’re on the border, and we have a huge population, but I was surprised to see Mexicans in Battle Mountain.

Oh, I think basically they're in every industry: they work on the ranches, and now the ones who could speak English...a lot of them got into the mining industry. And of course the Winnemucca area has a lot of potato farms and so forth. Most of the help there are Mexicans. And they came to that area, and then they branch out. Now they're in all the casinos and they're just about every place.

Were they recruited?

I couldn't tell you that, no. I don't know. I know the ones that came to work for Battle Mountain Gold usually just came out and applied. And you know, if they had the credentials and everything, why we employed them, and they're excellent employees, the ones that we have.

When different groups came in that were of a different culture, were they accepted by the community? was there a good feeling within the different groups? or was there ever any isolation of the people that came in, as there is in so many other communities far from Battle Mountain?

No, not that I'm aware of. They all get along quite well. We don't have any problems, even to *this* day, even with the younger people where you have that type of isolation.

One of the things that really amazes me in Battle Mountain: I think it's probably one of the rare places where people can leave their doors unlocked and walk in. Have you not had any problems with crime? And do you think it's because the economy is such that there's no people who are without the means to have shelter and food?

I think there's crime in the area...but just like last night, I left the keys in my vehicles

parked outside. I just got up this morning and got in them and started my car and left. Maybe that's not wise, but like you say, the doors are never left locked. I never lock my doors. Of course I have the dogs here. That's one of the great things about living in a rural community like this.

But you know there are other rural communities that are closer to large cities where they can't leave the doors open. So people who live here take that for granted, so I wanted to just find out a little about that, and am very impressed.

That's one of the reasons why I stay in rural Nevada—that's one of the main reasons.

In the early 1980's, the county seat moved from Austin to Battle Mountain and I've been reading about it. At that time there was controversy, of course, and Austin wasn't very happy. Can you tell me a little bit from your own personal observation or experiences, about that transition?

I never was involved, really, in the controversy, but it was the situation where Battle Mountain was growing to the point that...the people in Battle Mountain if you had to do any type of business, you had to go to Austin to do it, which was ninety-two miles. If you had to get married or something, you had to go to Austin and everything. Everything you had to do with permitting or anything, you had to go to Austin. So it just came to the point where Battle Mountain grew to the point it was no longer efficient to have the county seat in Austin.

Was the population then much larger here than in Austin?

Oh yes! Austin, oh yes, much greater.

I guess it's about ten or twelve years now that the county seat is here—has that affected the city? Have more people moved here because the county seat is here, having moved here from Austin? Or do you have new employees from other places coming to work for the government?

I don't think anybody from Austin came with the transition. As far as people coming here directly to work for the county seat, I wouldn't be able to even speculate on that.

George, do you have any additional observations or experiences to share before we end this interview?

No ma'am, I don't.

I want to thank you for sharing your experiences in this interview for the Lander County Oral History Project.

GEORGE ANCHO

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FRANK BERTRAND

PREFACE

Frank Bertrand's grandfather came to Nevada from eastern Canada and settled in Eureka, eventually owning a good-sized mine. He met Frank's grandmother in Austin where Matthew, Frank's father, was born, the youngest of four boys. Matthew's mother died a few months after he was born and he was raised by an aunt in Battle Mountain.

Frank's mother was working in a boarding house at the Cortez mining camp where she met Matthew Bertrand. They married and Frank was born in 1921 and Estelle, his sister, was born in 1924. Mr. Bertrand was hauling ore from Tenabo to Beowawe, where they lived until Frank was six or seven, then moved up to Cortez. Frank tells of his school days at Cortez and the fun he and Estelle had roaming around the sagebrush and collecting the chicken eggs.

Frank's father worked at many different jobs to support his family, including running a grocery store at Cortez, working with crews getting ice for the ice houses from the frozen

river and working at a gold mine at Carlin where they were building a mill. The family moved to Carlin where Frank went to high school.

Frank always liked ranching and worked for the Waltis on their ranch in Grass Valley when he was sixteen, living in their bunkhouse. He took care of the horses and ran buckrakes during the haying season and also worked for the Bowmans and four or five other ranches. Then he joined his father at the gold processing mill at Mill Canyon as an assayers helper. Frank's father had a heart attack while taking care of the mill engine, fell ten feet and died.

Frank enlisted in the Army Air Corps when World War II started. After the war, he returned to Austin and lived with his mother until his marriage in 1960. The mines had been closed, so he worked at many jobs, including the water department, foreman of a road crew and the forest service. In 1969 he became the justice of the peace for the Austin Township and describes in detail the multitude of responsibilities and his experiences in this position which he still enjoys.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Frank Bertrand at his home, in Austin, Nevada, May 11, 1993.

Good afternoon, Mr. Bertrand. I'm so pleased to be here interviewing you today. Would you please tell me your full name?

Frank Bertrand: Frank Allen Bertrand.

And where were you born?

In Reno, Nevada.

What date was that?

That was December 11, 1921.

I'd like to first learn a little bit about your father. Can you tell me his name and where he was born?

My father [Matthew H. Bertrand] was born here in Austin, some five miles to the north of town. He was raised by his mother's sister. Part of his life was spent in Battle Mountain.

Where did your grandparents come from?

Grandfather came from eastern Canada—not knowing his hometown, I wouldn't be able to tell you that—and his mother died, I think, a couple of months after his birth—my father's birth. He was raised by my mother's sister.

What brought your grandfather to Nevada?

Oh, I think it was just tough times. A lot of people were coming west, and he settled in

Eureka, Nevada, in the mining era, and owned part of a good-sized mine there at that time.

Do you know how long he lived there?

No, I don't really have any idea.

Do you know where he met your grandma?

Here in Austin, I believe, because she was raised in Austin.

I see. So he came and met your grandmother in Austin?

I'm sure he met her in Austin, yes.

Did your father's mother die young?

Died a couple of months after his birth.

Oh, how sad.

He was the youngest of four boys.

Oh, my! And he was the youngest. Where did the other boys live? Where did they grow up? Here in Austin?

Well, I don't know. Most of them lived here in Austin and grew up with their parents. Later on, I think the father, after the mother's death, they took the oldest boys and took them to a convent in California. And my father went with his mother's sister. Later on I think the other two got together with my father, and they went to Idaho and picked up the third brother and brought him back to Nevada.

I see. So then they all came here to Nevada. What did your father do? Did he stay here in Austin most of his life?

No, he spent most of his life, I believe, in Battle Mountain, growing up in Battle Mountain.

Oh, I see. When did he meet your mother? Do you know how they met?

Well my mother [Charlotte Allen Bertrand] had been working—had married, and was working in Cortez.

At the mine?

A big mining company there, and later on they knew each other. She was helping run a boarding house and he was eating there. After her first husband died, why she was more inclined to be with other people and so they got together then.

Did she have children from her first marriage?

No. There was no children.

So they married and they lived here in Austin after that?

No, they were, I think in Tenabo, and my father was running a big old tractor that hauled ore, pulled wagons loaded with ore from Tenabo to Beowawe. And of course in 1921 I came along.

Where was the home base when he was doing that work? Where were you living?

They were living at that time in Tenabo.

You were born there?

No, I was born in Reno.

Just because of the hospital?

Well my father's brothers were living there, and the families were there, so it was easier for them.

Right, but weren't you living in Tenabo then?

Yeah, but that was after I was born. Shortly thereafter, why, they moved to Beowawe.

I see. How long did you live there?

Oh, we never left there until after I was about six or seven years old.

Do you remember anything about those early years, or is that too soon?

No, that was a little too early I believe.

After that where did you go? Where did your family move?

Then we moved up to Cortez.

Was he working there in the mines?

No, he was a pumper. We lived down in the valley there, about a mile, mile-and-a-half from the mine. He pumped the water from the well to the tanks up on the hill above the mill that they had.

How long did you live there?

Oh, I think it was about a year-and-a-half.

Do you have any memories of that at all?

Oh yeah.

Tell me what you remember there.

Oh [chuckles], I was around the big equipment quite a bit, the pumps and what

not with my father. I never did get in the wells, they scared me. It was quite an experience, but there was just my sister and I, Estelle, and we played together and roamed around through the sagebrush.

How old were you when Estelle was born?

I was two years, two months, and a few days older than she was. But it was a good experience, I think, in my life. I remember people coming down from the town of Cortez to buy chickens from my folks.

Oh, they had a little ranch?

No, they just had a few heads, you know, a few chickens, and then in the Spring why they'd have young ones come on and they'd grow to fryers or whatever, and they'd kill them. I thought it was a long ways to Cortez from where we were, but people would walk down in the evening after work and then walk back.

How old were you during that period that you lived there?

Oh, seven, eight years old.

Did you have to do chores?

Oh yes, I had a certain amount of chores.

What were the chores?

Well, I had to chop some wood occasionally.

Did you have to collect the eggs, or do anything with the chickens?

Oh yeah. That was the fun part of it.

Did you start elementary school there?

Yeah. I first went to the first grade in Cortez. They had a one-room schoolhouse there and they had all eight grades.

Did you walk very far to go to school?

We didn't walk, our parents drove us to school.

Where was the school?

It was right in the middle of Cortez town.

Do you have any recollection of how many kids were in that one-room schoolhouse?

Well, not really. There was probably fifteen or twenty.

Did they bring a teacher in from outside?

Oh yes.

Do you remember anything about that?

The teacher I had first was Miss Allen. She and her mother lived there in one end of the school that was built so that teachers could live there. Oh, we had ball games and a few other things—that was about the extent of it. I don't remember too much.

You were pretty young. Do you remember what your living accommodations were like? Was it a little house, what was it that your little family lived in?

Well, at the pump house they had a regular house there for us. It was pretty fair, considering the mining camps and everything that were there.

Where did your family go from Cortez?

Oh, we went back to Beowawe.

You went back to Beowawe?

Yeah.

What did your father do there?

Well, he done a little of everything there. While he was in Cortez, of course, why, he had a grocery store there. Took care of that for the Beowawe Merc [Mercantile], which was in Beowawe of course. And then as we drifted away from that, why, he took whatever he could get. He worked with the ice crews in the fall of the year, or the winters, you know, to get ice for those that had the ice houses.

Do you know how they did that? Did you ever watch it—and how they did that?

Oh yeah.

Describe it, because I don't come from an area where there's ice. [chuckles]

They went out and marked the ice on the river and cleaned the snow off and everything, and marked where they were going to cut. Used to have sawyers you know, and they had these big saws and cut through—sometimes the ice would be a couple of feet deep, and of course Beowawe was noted for being cold in winter.

Would some people go and cut their own ice?

Very seldom.

So then did they buy it?

Yeah, they'd buy it in the summertime, for those that had the ice houses. Oh, a lot of

different things like that. Of course there was some mining going on, and my dad worked for that.

Did your mom tend to you two kids, or did she—did you start some little bit of farming, or what was her life like?

Well, she just took care of us kids, and my father was away quite a bit. He worked the gold up in what they now call Carlin gold area in Mill Creek. Oh, let me see, the name leaves me, I can't remember what they called it at the time. There was a fellow there in Beowawe that was promoting this gold, and he had my father up there and some other fellows from around Beowawe. I can recall going up there in the summertime, a bunch of us would all get together and go up on a picnic up there.

Oh! How far was it to go on to the picnic?

Well, I don't know...

And how did you get there?

Carlin was forty miles maybe.

How did you go?

Oh, cars, everybody had cars at the time. We'd go up there and have our picnic, and then they'd go around and look at different things going on. That was their way of promoting this, I believe. But I can recall that they were building a mill.

What kind of a mill?

Well it was where they put rocks on the bottom, and then they had a rock thing that they pulled around on this, and they put the

gold ore in there and it crunched all this up. The gold was going down between the cracks.

Like sifting it through?

Well no. They would go in there later on and pick it up. The people that were running the mill weren't making any money off it. But found out later on that the fellows working night shift there was digging the gold out of the cracks in the bottom.

Oh my!

And taking their tobacco out of their can and putting it in the bottom and then covering it back up.

Oh my gosh! Now how long did you stay there—your family?

In Beowawe?

Uh-huh.

See we lived in Beowawe. My dad spent the winter up there in 1932, and the snow and everything was terrible and he fell and broke his ribs or something, and they pulled him to Carlin I think, to the hospital there. Anyway, that left our mother and just us two kids there living in Beowawe during that time, and *her* sister was there, and her baby boy.

Where was their home? Did they live there too, or they came to keep her company?

Well, they lived there too, but her husband moved to wherever he was working, you know, and she was living with us at the time.

Tell me a little bit about your mother—what kind of a person she was—from your remembrances.

Well, she was all for taking care of her family first. She was always busy, one thing or another. I can remember her sifting and mending the socks and the clothes and doing all the cooking. I'll go back a little ways and explain. When they first came back from Reno with me, why there's a little old ranch out at Beowawe there about a mile. My father was working there feeding cattle, and she was cooking for the fellows. I guess it was a real cold winter, 1921. She used to tell me how it was the middle of December, and the things kind of stood, and it was twenty-one below zero at noon.

Oh my! Would she take you along when she brought the food? Did she have to bring the food to the workers?

Oh no, we all lived right there on the ranch.

So they came to your house?

Yeah, the home and everything was right there. The cook shack and everything was all in one long building.

How many did she have to cook for?

I don't know. Three or four I guess, plus the family.

Did she have any of her own hobbies, or things that she liked for her own self?

Well, that I don't know, I wouldn't be able to go back that far. We traveled you know: we'd go fishing and all these things, and different places. My dad had been for years an old buckaroo, and a broncstomper and everything, and did all this part of the country. So he knew the country like the back of his

hand, and if he wanted to go here, it was all right, we'd take a picnic lunch and go.

Would he take you hiking around the rocks?

Oh whatever. When we was living in Cortez, we used to go to the top of Mount Tenabo. This was years after what I've been speaking of.

Now your father, you started to say he was a buckaroo and he sounds like he was full of adventure. Tell me a little bit about your dad.

As far as I know he hung around Beowawe and Battle Mountain. Now I think he got most of his schooling in Battle Mountain. There was a fellow there that was deputy sheriff, I guess, at the time. They were fairly mean to him in school. This sheriff, he went down and found him somewhere, everyplace he was hiding out, he knew where he was. So he took him in as his son, too.

Oh. Because he lost his mom.

Yeah. Consequently, I guess he went to school alright. I don't think he was in school too many years. But anyway he went to work for those cattle companies there all up and down the river, clear over to Paradise Valley, and up around—I suppose it was as far north as Maggie Creek, and that part of the country, and Dean Ranch, if you know where the Dean Ranch is over there in Crescent Valley?

No.

Crescent Valley, just south of Beowawe there about twenty miles. Anyway, he used to tell us how when he was breaking horses, things that would happen and all this, you know, and different places he was, people

that he knew. His two brothers, older brothers, they worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, as brakemen on the passenger trains, both of them were—well one died in 1932, and the other one died in 1978, I think it was. But Norris was the one that died in 1978, he'd worked thirty-five years on that run, from Sparks to Carlin and back.

So how long did you live there before you moved to another place? I want to bring you through your childhood. Did you live through all your grammar school there? Or did your family move again?

I went into the second grade in Cortez, then they went to Beowawe.

For how long?

Oh, we went down there in 1931 I think it was, then we come back to Cortez in 1935, and we were there until 1937, I believe.

What grade were you in by then?

Well, I graduated in Cortez.

So you lived your life in those couple of places?

Yes.

So then tell me, as you began to get into the higher elementary classes, and then starting high school, what was your life like as you were reaching at age ten and eleven and twelve?

Well I think, as I recall, I was going to school in Beowawe when I was ten, eleven and twelve, and we moved to Cortez, and I graduated from grammar school there. We went the next year to Carlin, to high school.

*Did you leave your family to go to high school?
Or did they move?*

No, Mother moved right along with us.

*Did she move there for the schools, or did she
move there because of your father's work?*

No, moved because of the schools.

So it was just not that far?

Well, from Cortez to Beowawe was thirty-five miles, and I think Carlin is something like twenty-four or twenty-five miles.

*Tell me about your high school years when you
went to Carlin.*

I went to second year of high school, and then I decided not to go anymore.

*As you began to get into your teens, what did
you find you were interested in? Did you find
any specific areas of things you really liked?*

Well, I liked it with the horses and the cattle.

Okay, so you liked to be a rancher kind of guy.

Yeah. I worked for Walti's. That's this Elsie's father and brothers—summer of 1936.

And where did you work? Where was that?

It's a ranch out here in Grass Valley.

Was that your first job on a ranch?

Well, pretty much. I'd worked for my folks, you know—grandparents a little bit, and I knew what it was all about.

How old were you went to work for them?

I was sixteen.

Did you live there with them on the Ranch?

Well, I had a bunkhouse.

A bunkhouse, and what was some of your...

Well I doing the haying in the summertime, and then when I finished their haying, I went to work for the Bowmans, which was up on the creek above, at McCluskey Creek.

Is that another ranch?

Yes.

And what did you do there?

The same thing. I took care of the horses and run buckrakes, and the rakes.

*Now what's—for someone who's not a country
gal, what's "buckrakes"?*

Well a buckrake is—you rake the hay with a sulky rake, and it's got a bunch of tines behind it, and you got two horses in the front, and you rake it up into "windrows," they call it. Then from the windrow you take a big—oh, it's probably ten feet wide or twelve feet wide, and big old two-by-four teeth on it, and they're probably six or eight feet long. So you move this—get under the hay, the horses are on side, they're way off to the side, and you steer them to go around that way while you hold back one, and you go the other way.

Did you like to do that?

I enjoyed that. So then the hay piles up on there just *way* up, you know. And then you yard it into the stack yard, and then they'll get a day when they want to stack and get all of it in. So that's all you do is just feed that there hay onto *another* set of teeth, and then it comes over and stacks the hay.

So that was kind of fun, and you were away from home. How did that feel?

Well, I was only probably five miles.

Did you stay at the ranch?

Oh yes, we stayed there at the place where I was working.

You were kind of on your own for the summer, right?

Oh yeah. From that time on, I was.

So bring me along. You were sixteen, and then you were working on these ranches, then what?

Well, as time progressed, I worked two years that way for Bowman. And of course we had four or five different places where we cut hay on.

Was that seasonal work?

Oh yeah.

What did you do when there wasn't work?

Well they didn't need me anymore, so I went over where my father was working, at this time in what they called Mill Canyon, and they had a gold processing mill there, so I went to work there.

Tell me what you did there.

They put me on first as an assayers helper. I'd ground the rock by hand, and prepared all this rock that they brought down off from the mine to be sampled.

Describe that procedure. When they mine they have to bring samples to the assayer's office?

Yeah.

And tell me in detail what that's about and why.

Well they do this to determine whether they're still in the ore body, or out of it, or to give them an idea of how *much* gold there is in each type of rock.

Uh-huh. Is the assayer an independent? or working for the government? Or what role is the assayer?

No, this was years before BLM (Bureau of Land Management) or any of those were...

Was this just to help the miner to know how far to explore, or what was the role?

Well generally in the rock you have a certain type here on one side of it, and on the other side you have a different, harder rock, and sometimes it kind of goes in together and it tells you that maybe you find something new coming in and it may have *more* gold in this case...

Did you work for the company? Did the assayer work for the company?

Oh yeah. Everybody was working for the company. This was Greenan and Company out of Reno. He had a company there that as far as I know, they were making money.

And you were assisting, you were learning?

Oh yeah.

That was your first experience in mining?

Yes.

How did you like that?

Well, it was pretty fair, I couldn't complain. The fellows at the mine, high-paid men were getting five-and-a-half [dollars] a day, and I was working in the Assay Office getting four-and-a-half.

Well that's pretty good.

So I thought I was doing alright.

Yeah. How old were you then, when you first started that?

Oh I was about seventeen years old.

Oh that's fine for a young man. And then what?

Well, wintertime came along and they had to close down because it was quite a ways up on the mountain from where the mill was, you know. Actually they had to bring their ore out and put it in a chute bin, and then they had an aerial tram that took it down to the trucks and they'd truck it down. So anyway they weren't doing much in the Assay Office, so they put me in the mill—clean-up man and different things like that, and crushing the ore. I worked there until June. I went to work in October I think it was, for them, and they let me go in June of the next year. But the rest of the fellows were working in the silver ore right across the canyon from the mill. My father was working at the mill taking care of

the engine. Mother and I were at home. The lights were supplied by the diesel engine. The lights flickered in the whole town three times, which indicated there was something wrong at the mill. Everyone, including Mother and I, went down to the mill. It was about a mile. I drove Mother and I in our 1939 Plymouth sedan. When we got there, we found that my father had a heart attack while up on the Fairbanks diesel engine. The top of the engine was about twelve feet from the floor. Dad fell from the landing which was about ten feet from the floor. We called the doctor in Elko who was also the coroner. He had to come approximately 75 miles. They took his body to the funeral home in Elko in the back of a pickup.

And tell me what happened after he died.

Well my mother was working in a boarding house over there, cooking and what-not, just across the stream. And I was working in the mill of course, and I worked there until June of that year. Some of the other fellows that were working there—some of them went to work in the silver [mine] that was just across the canyon. Anyway, I went out to my grandmother's place.

Where was Grandma's place?

Well, that was out on McCluskey Creek, down in the valley below McCluskey Creek.

How far was that from where your mother was living?

Well, my mother was going out there too, at the time.

Oh, okay, you all went back to her place.

Well yeah, because Father was gone, and I was working in the hay some.

When your father died was he ill, or was it unexpected?

Well, he'd been having heart trouble for years.

In those days did they have pensions, or widow's funds, or did it take away your family's means of living?

Well, there was nothing, we had no insurance or anything like that.

No Social Security?

Well, Social Security was just coming in. And as I recall, I worked in the hay, my mother was down there with *her* mother, and her mother wasn't able to do anything then.

Were you responsible for helping financially then? was that your responsibility then?

No, not really. I think that mother was doing alright by herself there.

What was she doing when she was at your grandmas?

Oh, she was helping my grandmother I guess, and the boy's—brothers.

Uh-huh, but she wasn't making any money?

No, no.

But she had a home there?

There was a home there at the time.

Where was your sister by now?

Well I think she was going here to school in Austin, high school.

Uh-huh, who did she live with?

Some people by the name of Ryan.

Okay, I'll get that story from her. [laughter]

Yeah.

So then tell me what you did after that?

Well, I was working for the Bowmans in McCluskey Creek, haying that summer. Come fall I decided I was going to join the service. The war was on you know.

Oh, and what year was that?

That was 1942.

What did you join?

I come in here, I knew some fellows in here, I hadn't been here too much. But I came in here to Austin, and talked to Marion Escobar, and he was talking about going into the service, so I wanted him to come in with me. No, no. So anyway, I went by myself.

What branch of the service?

Oh, I was in the Army Air Corps.

So you volunteered here in Austin?

No, I had to go to Reno to volunteer.

Oh to Reno, and how long were you in the service?

Oh, I was in there about three years and four or six months, something like that.

Okay, we're not going to go into detail on that because we want Lander County, but I just want to find out, did you go overseas?

Well, most of time was spent in the States, I was all over the States.

When you got out of the service after the war, where did you go?

I came to Austin.

You came to Austin?

Yeah. I did go over to Saipan and Tinian and that country.

How did it feel for a boy who lived in a lot of small places, to go to such strange parts of the world?

Well, it was a [chuckles] challenge, I'll tell ya'!

[chuckles] So were you glad to come back to Austin?

Oh yeah, oh yeah, I was glad to get out. But we left Portland, Oregon on a liberty ship and we got half-way between here and the Hawaiian Islands and the ship sprung a leak. So we bounced around in the ocean out there with no power on for three or four days.

[chuckle] You'd never been on an ocean until then I'll bet.

That's about right, yeah. Anyway, then we set in Honolulu Harbor. And they took us up to camp up there on Oahu. We were up there

a month having the ship repaired, whatever, and by gosh we had every other day in town or wherever we wanted to go on the island, which was pretty nice. Then they put us back on the ship and took us down to Tinian—was on Tinian from November, I think it was, to February or March.

Well, I'm going to get you back to Nevada, because we want Lander County history [chuckles], but did you ever think when you were in the service that you might go to another part of the United States to live? or did you always know you would come back to Nevada?

Oh, I didn't have any reason to think that I wanted to go any place else to live.

So when you came back, you probably visited your family first. Were they still living with Grandma after that three-and-a-half years? Where was your mother?

Oh, my mother was living here.

In Austin?

Working for the Postal Department.

Alright, what brought her back to Austin from your grandma's house? When you went to the service she was there.

No. Estelle was still going to high school when she moved back in here.

Did Grandma come along?

No, no, she stayed there.

So when you were in the service—when you came back from the war and you came to Austin, were you a hero? Did they treat you

really great coming back after all that time? Tell me what it was like when you arrived in Austin.

Well; when I arrived in Austin—it was as new here to me as it was over there almost, because I hadn't been here but two or three times when I was on leave from New Mexico. Consequently, I didn't know very many people. But Marion Escobar and some of those fellows were already back. Manuel Barainca and different ones that I had known before, you know, and they accepted me just like one of their old buddies of course, being we all had been in the military, it was easy to make friends with military personnel.

Where did your mother live?

Well, she lived in several different places in town.

Did you live with her when you first came back?

Yeah, I lived there.

Was her house up in these hills?

Oh yeah, right over here.

Was Estelle home too?

No. Estelle had gotten married, and she and her husband and Barbara—they had a little girl—and they were living in Round Mountain.

Where were they living?

In Round Mountain. That's over here now where they got the big gold strike, you know.

Uh-huh. So you came back to Austin. What did you do? Where did you work?

Well, I went to work for Lee Maestretti, in a power company—he run the power, and Marion Escobar was working there.

How old were you then? In your twenties?

Yeah, that was in 1946—I was twenty-five years old.

What did Austin look like when you arrived? Did it look much like it looks today?

Well, it looks pretty much the same, the courthouse is all in the same place, and although Main Street below town—below the courthouse and—up the street. It's changed considerable.

Explain, describe how its changed.

Of course the churches and everything are still in place, but we'll say this side of the courthouse where the Shell station is, there was a railroad station there.

Really?!

You might say it was a miniature, it wasn't much bigger than a room.

A little depot?

A little depot.

Oh! Did the train stop here?

No, there had been a train come up through town here to the mines—years before. First it was mules driving, pulling the car. Later they had the mules' relief, which was a wood burning engine, and it came on up here, and that was where people could catch that thing going to Battle Mountain.

Oh, I see. What year did that stop?

I really don't know. Even though I've gone through that quite a bit with different people, you know, who were just inquisitive.

I want to know what you saw personally in Austin when you came back. You only visited here briefly, though, before that. Is that right?

That's right, yeah.

Just tell me what was the town like when you came here to live after the war?

Well, it seemed to me, as I recall, it was pretty busy. A lot of veterans coming back, and the veterans' organization here was really getting out and—had a lot of dances to begin with here, every Saturday night.

Where were they held?

Well, the majority of them were held in the Austin Hotel. They had a big floor up there.

That burned down.

And that's burned down.

When did that burn down? Where you here when it burned down?

Oh yes. That was in 1977.

That must have been traumatic.

Well, not too. It just seemed to burn up by itself, never caught anything else on fire.

But had the hotel deteriorated by then? or was it still...

It was about the same.

So that was a big disaster for the town.

Oh yeah, definitely.

Yeah, definitely. Tell me—start with when you finally moved back and were settling in, how long did you stay there in the same house with your mother?

Well, over the years when I'd come on leave she was living in the house that belongs to Hickison.

But I mean here in Austin. How long did you live here in Austin, in the same house with your mother? Did you live with your mother very long?

She bought a place over there just before I got out of the service.

Here in Austin?

Here in Austin.

Oh, okay.

Lived there with her until I married.

And when was that?

In 1960.

That was your first marriage?

Yes.

Did you work at different things through those years, before you got married, when you came back from the service?

Oh yeah, yeah.

Just whatever came around?

Right.

Was work slowing down in the area—the mines closing, or closed already?

Well, the mines had been closed years before.

What was the main source of work? Was there still ranching?

I worked just a little of everything. The first steady job I had was working for the water system, and I worked for it for four-and-a-half years.

When did you start there, and what did you do?

Well, every month you had to go out and collect three dollars for people that had water spigot inside the house. And one dollar if it was outside.

Like the water department?

That's right. But it had to be collected every...

Personally?

Personally, every month.

Oh, oh, for goodness sake.

There was no billing system.

Really! You had to go climbing around the hills and finding people home?

Well, no, but they were all right here in Austin.

Were they home? They'd be there?

Oh yeah!

So you said about four years?

Four-and-a-half years.

Four-and-a-half years, and how did that end?

Well, the district attorney came to me one day—county commissioners were meeting *here* at the time, and he said, "Frank, they need a new foreman for their road crew—the county. You better go over there and see if you can't get on there." So I did, and I got on.

Oh, okay! So tell me then what did you do in that job?

Well, I was foreman—it isn't quite the same anymore. If they wanted a road built here or there, or just maintaining the roads, with what equipment we had—we had very little equipment—two or three trucks, a Scoop International TD9, and a blade, and a pull blade, and a little old—it was Caterpillar that was built for doing work in orchards, it had a little six-foot blade on the dozer. We had to improvise in a lot of cases.

Did you have a steady crew, or would you hire for each job?

Well no, we had a steady crew.

A steady crew. How many?

Well, the most I ever had was six.

Wow, that's a lot of people to supervise. Did you keep pretty busy?

Oh yeah.

Was it constant work?

Yeah, yeah, we were working all the time. Either we were pushing snow, or...

Oh gee!

...hauling gravel, or blading roads, you know.

And how far an area did you cover in that work?

Well, about half of Lander County.

Wow! That's a big job. Did you like that?

Oh, I enjoyed it, yeah.

Then why did that stop? Did you move on to other things?

Well, yeah, we were on to other things.

And what was that?

Well, I went to work for a mining company—mercury mine.

What kind of mine was that?

It was for getting the mercury out of the ground and processing it, and I was running blade—power blade, and dozer work, and all that, and driving truck. That's about the most I done with it. But that lasted about six months, I guess. It was quite an experience.

Now, the road work where you were supervising, what ended that job? Did things slow down?

No. They just decided they needed a different man in there, and that's the way it was. Every year we had to put in our application.

I see. It wasn't just a permanent civil service or anything.

No.

Now, I see you got married in 1960. Where and how did you meet Madge? [Madgelene Irene Ingenthron]

Well I was working for a state highway survey in Carson, and her daughter had married a fellow that was working with me, and I had invited he and his wife to come up here, and so when they came, why the brought the girl's mother.

They wanted to match you up?

[chuckle] I don't know! [laughter]

So you met her here in Austin?

Yeah.

Where was she living?

In Sacramento.

And had she been visiting with her daughter? Is that why they brought her? She happened to be there?

Yeah, yeah.

Okay, so that doesn't sound like making a match.

Her daughter's husband wanted to go deer hunting. We had already planned it, and then they wanted to come too.

You were going to go deer hunting with him? So Madge was visiting her daughter, and he brought them along?

Yeah.

And tell me about your meeting.

Well, I don't know, I was living over in—my mother had married.

Your mother had married?

For the third time.

Really!? Oh, we've got to go back over that a little bit.

Her husband at that time was from back in Tennessee, or some place back there, and so he had a place down just outside of Vegas that he wanted to go to in the wintertime, and it was getting cold up here, so they had left.

Were you still living with your mother?

I was living with my mother over at the home.

Your mother and your stepfather?

Yeah. That's right. And so anyway they were there with us, you know, and we all went hunting deer.

The women too?

Sure.

Yeah? Madge went hunting?

Yeah!

Is she a hunter?

Welt, she went anyway. [laughter]

Was she hunting you?

Well I don't know! [laughter] Anyway, I think she came over several times afterwards, but it was only two or three months before we got married.

Oh my! How old were you when you married?

Well, that was in 1960.

Thirty-three years ago.

Uh-huh, that's right. So I was thirty-eight.

So that's an older man. I mean for a first marriage.

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Was it a little scary to make a commitment? or were you kind of happy to...

Oh, I don't know.

You don't remember?

[chuckle] I don't think it was scary, really.

Different?

I knew it was going to be different.

Yeah. Now let's back up a little bit. You said your mother married a couple more times.

Who was the first man she married, after your dad died?

Oh, she had been married prior to my father and her marriage.

That's right, without children, and then after your father died she married...

Oh, this fellow here, he was here in Austin.

So this one was the third one, the one here—an Austin man.

Well, he wasn't an Austin man—well, he was I guess. He'd been living all over the States.

So did that marriage last until your mother passed away?

Oh no. No, he'd passed away in 1960.

He passed away, and did she marry again?

No, no.

So Madge had to make a dramatic move to move here.

Oh yeah! She was in Sacramento.

Yeah! That's quite a difference.

You bet!

So how'd that work?

Oh, it worked alright, yeah. We married in Winnemucca, and then I went down there with her.

Went down where?

Down to Sacramento.

Did you live there a while?

No, no, just—because I had that job here.

So you helped her moved up here?

I first went down on the bus, it was snowing. Then I took my car and went down to help her move.

After you married, where did you both live in Austin?

Well, my stepdad had a place behind the grocery store over there, and we lived in there.

It was an empty place?

Yeah, it was empty.

So you started there.

So then the ranger come to me—wanted me to work for the Forest Service. So I said, "Sure!"

Everybody came to you to get you to work for them! That's a good sign.

And so the other fellow, Don Schmidtlein, that was living over here in the house was working as a GDA, they called him.

What does GDA stand for?

Well, that's a General District...

Administration?

Yeah. Anyway, he wanted to go to Utah to college. So they had bought this house over

There, and it was a good price on it, you know: \$3,000.

Oh my!

And so we bought that.

Oh, he was going to sell the house? I see, so you bought it.

And we moved from there right up there.

When did you get this house?

We bought this house in [chuckles] I don't recall. We've been living here about twenty-seven years.

Oh my!

We moved over here in August of 1965.

And then you sold that house?

No, we have it rented out.

Oh, that's good.

Yeah, we've been renting it all through the years.

Oh, that's good. Who rents it?

We've had school teachers, and sheriff's office personnel, and people like that most of the time.

So your life changed dramatically. Did your mother get to know Madge well?

Oh yeah!

They get along good?

Well, [chuckles] you know how it is! They made out, you know, and I think that mother was very fond of Madge really.

Was she happy that you married?

Oh yeah.

She knew you'd be taken care of?

She'd been wanting me to get married years before, you know. But anyway, we've been living here ever since.

So your life changed dramatically?

Oh yeah.

Yeah. Now you had a new job with the Forest Service. Right?

Right.

What did you do in that job?

Well, to begin, Schmidtlein was leaving, and I was just catching on, you know.

But what kind of work did you do for them?

Oh, a little of everything.

Well, I don't know what that means. You have to describe it.

Of course Schmidtlein had been raised in these mountains and everything, and he knew it like the back of his hand almost. The ranger had just came on to the district in November, and I went to work for them in March, of the next year, and he was taking us around to show us everything. We built fence for the first month, out here.

Alright, that tells me something.

The ranger and I put in the cattle guard out there, and then he says, "We gonna have to ride horseback." So the three of us took the horses and went here and yon, and some places I never seen since! [chuckles]

Had you ever ridden horse?

Oh yes!

How long did you work for the Forest Service?

Well, let's see, ten years—just under ten years. I liked it real well, but Personnel changed things.

Oh. So then what did you do?

The county needed a justice of the peace in Austin.

Oh! And what year was that?

It was 1969.

Oh, that early.

Yeah. However, the county came out with a notice in the paper that they were going to accept applications. Oh, I didn't think much of it, I just forgot about it, because my brother-in-law was putting in his application, you see.

Oh. Now when you say your brother-in-law, that was Estelle's husband?

Yeah. Not this fellow.

The one before?

Yeah.

Okay.

And they didn't take any applications. Commissioners just set it aside. And so next month somebody said, "Why didn't you put in?" So I did. Well, the other two fellows put in again too. Commissioners called me in, and were talking to me and asking me questions and all this. They wanted to know what I had done in the past. So I told them some of it. They seemed to think that I had a pretty well knowledgeable, so they asked, "Have you got anybody in mind that you want to take to court?" And I said, "Hell, no!" [laughter] "I have no axe to grind or anything." So I got the job.

Oh, wonderful!

And I've been at it ever since.

Oh, that's wonderful! Now tell me, when you first started the job, starting with very early, how did it feel, and what were some of the things that were part of the job when you started? I imagine it must have been hard, something so new. Tell me how it felt and some of things you had to do.

Well, it was rather a drastic change.

An office job after being out in the woods. [chuckles]

Well, that was the worst part of it I think. But I knew the justice of peace in Battle Mountain. I'd known him for years, E. Charles Lemaire. He was a nice guy. And I'd call him on the phone, you know, and say, "What do you do with a case like this?" [chuckles]

Good. You had a mentor! [chuckles]

Right. And he'd keep me straight, you know. And two years went by, and then Santini—he was a JP (Justice of the Peace) I think he was, in Vegas—wrote letters to all of the JPs. The only man I knew was E. Charles Lemaire in Battle Mountain, see, that was a JP, and it was the same way with all these other fellows, that they didn't know who this other guy was down there.

So did they start a little organization?

So he got us all together in Reno.

Wonderful, wonderful.

He had fellows there: Beamer who was JP. And we all hung-in out at Stead Air Force Base, and we had this big GI kitchen, you know.

Oh, what fun!

To do our business in.

How often did you meet?

Well, this was just the beginning, the first ones. We all got to know each other, and was really pleased with it, you know. And of course we'd eat lunch in there, and some of the attorneys, or somebody there from Reno would be there to talk to us during the period that we were eating our lunch, which I had never seen before, and I thought it was great that they could come in and talk to us while we're eating and not waste that hour, see.

Do you know what year that was?

That was in 1972 as I remember. And then the next year we were at the University Inn [Reno], and everybody hung-in together

there. I want to back up a little bit. I did also know the JP in Eureka. His father and my father rode on all these big ranches together, years back.

Oh, how interesting.

And I had known him here in Austin, prior. So we compared notes. And the next year about the same time, why, we had another meeting, like I was saying, over to the University Inn, and everybody stuck together, and we got better acquainted, you know. But from there on out, when we had the meetings, it was the town there. So then they got to go to Winnemucca, and Elko, and Tonopah.

You started to have it different places each year?

Yeah. Which was alright.

Did they meet in Austin?

No, no. Because generally they got two or three hundred people.

Oh, where you would have to have a big enough place. Now I want to get back to your work here in Austin, and so tell me, as clearly as possible, the kinds of things that you do, and have done as justice of the peace: not naming people or trials, but what's the scope of that job? What are your responsibilities as justice of the peace?

Well, that's a big area. But the majority of the reason is that a lot of the time they call Justice Court, People's Court, and that's the first court you go to, if your in trouble.

Tell what you do with the first time you go to People's Court. What you do, and what the people do.

Well, it depends on what happened. You have a first appearance—say, for, yourself, if you done something and they pick you and bring you in. They set a date for your first appearance.

Are you the one they come to?

They come to the court, yeah, the Justice Court.

The Justice Court, and are you the person?

Yeah, the JP is the person that handles it. Yes. And you have a clerk now. The first years we didn't have any clerks, some of us, the majority of us didn't have clerks, only the bigger cities. Then they made laws where you had to put it on this same type of thing here. And so we'd have to get everything on, and not supposed to get anything on until you to go to as high as arraignment.

Lets go back to their first appearance at Peoples Court: They come and you're there, and they appear before you.

Uh-huh.

And then later, at arraignment, are you still in that process at arraignment?

The JP is still in that process.

You're still in the process, and then you have to set this up, and everything that goes on then is taped?

Right.

Is that what you're saying?

Yeah, after the arraignment everything is taped. I tape it all.

Okay, you tape it all and you're the one they tell—that is judging,

Well, the judge in the first appearance reads them their rights, what they were picked up for: could be anything, you know, that is considered a crime. And from there on, why, first appearance and you set a date for their appearance. And arraignment, and that's all set by the court, and we go as high as a preliminary hearing in a felony case. You have an arraignment, and that determines what's going to happen in the later part of the case. Your attorneys, in a lot of cases are there. Later on they *have* to be there.

Do you make any of the major decisions in the cases?

Well, in preliminary hearings, and misdemeanor cases the JP does it all.

You do it all. Now, let me ask this. What is the area of responsibility—does it go beyond the City of Austin? How far is your jurisdiction?

Oh, this jurisdiction is what they call the Austin Township.

And does that include Kingston, and Silver Creek, and all of that?

It goes from the county line where it meets Nye County to half-way up here, you know, as you come from Battle Mountain down this way. Just before you get into the canyon over here, there's a cattle guard across the road. That's the north boundary. And it goes from the county line on this side to the county line.

That's pretty big. About how many cases do you have—I know it varies—but what's kind of the approximate estimate in a month, let's say, or in a year?

It fluctuates so terribly.

Okay, go back to when you started, and about how many in a year compared to how many now in a year? Did it get more and more, or less and less?

Oh, it gets more. Traffic is probably our biggest, that we have to take care of.

Okay, let's eliminate traffic, and on the other kinds of crimes, which are more—going back in the sixties and through now, how has that varied, and other kinds of crimes in number or in types?

Well, that would be rather hard for me to even estimate.

Are you busier now than you were then, are you busier because of the traffic?

Well, we also have small claims, which is civil, you know. Well, there's a lot of other things in there, too numerous to mention, that we have to take care of.

How busy is your work week? Do you have to put in five days a week all day, or how do you work it?

Well, the thing is it says in the law book "Justice Court never closes." So it could be in the middle of the night.

Oh, they could call you?

Yeah.

Here?

Yeah, anytime. Justice Court never closes.

I see. Now give me some idea of the kinds of, the amount of cases that go on to the final stage, not the ones where they're just coming in and they're dismissed, but have those kinds of cases where they come all the way through to trial—how has that changed from the sixties up until now?

Well, there was probably more of that in the sixties than any other time.

Is that when all the miners were here?

Well, at that time turquoise was booming. We had a lot of trouble with the turquoise.

In what way?

Oh, people trying to take it from somebody else, and all this kind of thing.

Were there a lot of problems in claims with the stealing of animals on the range?

Not so much.

Not so much of that.

No. Well, people going and taking this turquoise off of other people's property.

Oh, more of the gems, and...

Yeah, during that time.

And then what is it like, let's say, in the I...

Ten years?

Yeah!

It was more civil cases later as time went on. And during the time that this mining company was working out here at Dry Canyon, lots of people were trying to get by without paying their rent.

Have there been many things like gun shooting, or robberies, or killings, or anything like that, that happens in so many places?

Well, there was some, yes. We had one here, year or so ago. It was rather an odd—where the old boy—they both drinking together, see, the old boy was being chastised all the time because he wouldn't do this and do that.

By a parent?

No, they were older men.

Oh, couple of older men.

Yeah, one man was, oh, I suppose he's probably in his late sixties, the fella that done the killing.

What are the things that you find the most satisfaction from, and the things that you really have to do, but find it not as pleasant?

Well, right now things are going along pretty nicely, you know. All the officers, the majority of them, know their business pretty well. Some of them been here with us for a long time. And of course, when I first went on as JP, we were coroners too.

Oh, my goodness!

Probably that was the most [chuckles] depressing part. . . Anyway, they have changed

that, and the Sheriff is the coroner now, and they appoint others to be his...So we don't have that.

Do you wear a robe when you're in court?

Oh yes, yes.

Yeah, got to get a picture of you in your robe.

When we first started out we didn't have robes, but as time went on, and the organization get to functioning, why, we all got robes.

You all follow the same kind of a format?

Yeah.

That's good. And have you found this a very satisfying career?

Oh, oh yes. I think it has been.

Is it a county job?

Yeah, oh it's a county position, yeah.

It's a county, so that you have retirement and benefits finally, and health insurance hopefully?

Oh yeah, yeah, yes.

Do they give you a county car when you go to these meetings?

Oh no, no.

They don't loan you a county car?

No, they pay us.

Uh-huh, for mileage and...

The majority of the time—well, there's some that we have to go up to see the county commissioners why they pay us out of the county...But the majority of the time if we go to a function that's called by the...See we're under the Supreme Court, it's a function under the Supreme Court, and they have set aside a certain amount of money from the State to take care of our transportation, and our meals, and things like that. It's a regular expense account. They've been having our annual meetings in Mesquite and Laughlin.

Just once a year.

It's a long time, you know, long drives down like that. First when they started out, why, it was in Tonopah, and places like that, where everybody came. I think it worked better that way because, you know, if you drive to Laughlin it takes you seven or eight hours to get down there. Why, some people, you know, fly to Las Vegas—we have. But you still have ninety, or a hundred miles to go to Laughlin, you know. And then you got the same with going to Mesquite if you want to fly.

I want to get into another area, and that is, when the county seat was moved to Battle Mountain, when the vote moved the county seat. So I want to hear from you, because then you were there as justice of the peace, and you were closely involved. So I'd like you to tell me about, before the election, because I'm sure there must have been a lot of lobbying on both ends of the county. Tell me how that was, and how it was after the vote, and then how it affected your job.

Well, it really didn't affect my job to any great extent, other than the fact that when the Clerk of the District Court and those moved

to Battle Mountain, then I was able to move into the District Clerk's office.

Gave more space.

Gave us more space and all that, you know. Before, when I first went in there, the District Attorney was living in Battle Mountain, and working out of there, and he said, "Well, Frank you better take *my* office." The prior JP had to do his books in his home.

Oh my!

And had a little table in the Sheriff's Office, that if he sat down to—why, that's where he had to do his handwriting. So he put me in there, and that was full of old stuff that the DA's Office had accumulated over the years.

So, your probably the only one who benefited!
[chuckles]

So, I was in there, and then Judge Smart comes along, he says, "I need a jury room." So he says, "Judge, I need you to move into *my* office, and we'll both work out of the same office." *[chuckles]* We had the offices together, and he had his—where I moved out of, and then when they moved the District Court down there, why, I got a nice big courtroom and everything to work out of. It was really nice.

So, how did it affect the others who were there? Like your sister, and others who didn't want to move to Battle Mountain? Was there a real battle here over that change of the county seat?

You know, it was bound to come. In the fifties they had some problems, you know, and the Supreme Court ruled in favor of leaving it in Austin.

I see.

And in 1979, it went to a vote of the people, and of course the population was on the other end, and everybody knew it was going to go that way.

It's hard to give up something.

Other than the prestige of saying, "Well, the county seat is in Austin," I don't think about that. I don't know whether he was conning me or not, but I talked to one of the commissioners that had been in office prior to moving, and I ran into him. I said, "Why, Dick, I thought by gosh you'd be county commissioner again in the fall." He said, "Frank, I told the old boy the other day down here, if they'd moved the county seat back to Austin, I'd run tomorrow." But down here there's too many people on you all the time, and you can't get away from them."

Oh, when you're in Battle Mountain?

Yeah. That's what he said, you know.

Well, now Ray, you know, who's Chair of the commissioners, travels up there for the meetings.

Oh yeah!

And that's good, because then he is a good representative for Austin.

Oh yeah. Yeah, I think Ray has done a good job for us. He has represented us real well I think, and he goes all over the State, you know, representing us.

How many from Austin are on the Board of Commissioners that meet in Battle Mountain? Are there others beside Ray?

Oh no. There's only three commissioners. You know, some places have five.

Okay, so he's the only one from Austin?

Yeah.

So that's good then that you have representation. Is there anything more about your job that you feel that people should know about the role of the justice of the peace? Oh, do you marry people?

Right. The JP has that...

Are there lots of those?

No. Not in Austin. See, they have to be someplace where there's the county seat, to be able to get those.

So they'd have to go to Battle Mountain?

They have to be able to get a marriage license, you see, and they can't get it here. So they go down there, and they can get married right there too.

Do some of the locals do that, and then come back and get married in the church here? Some people who live in Austin, do you marry them?

Oh yeah!

But what happens if they marry in a church, then you don't marry them?

No. Well, I did. Some people wanted me.

Do you like to perform weddings? Happy occasions?

Well, it's alright, you know. Sometimes it's—I've had a few where people had too much to drink.

Oh dear!

They'd get rambunctious, you know.

Oh my goodness. What is the part of your job that you find the most satisfaction in?

Oh, I don't know. I've never experienced it that way. Just was a job, that was about it.

I mean in this job as justice of peace. Is there any part of it that you find more satisfying than other aspects?

Well, I like to treat the people right. As far as I know I haven't had too much criticism, and it's just been a good, nice job. Sometimes you get a little worried, "Well now how am I gonna handle *this*?!"

Yeah, I would imagine so, lot of it—but then you can call your colleagues, right? And get a little advice?

Yeah, I can do that, yeah, yeah.

Because it's hard to make major decisions that affect a person's life.

Then we can go and help the other fellows out, you know, and sit in the other counties. When Judge Gandolfo was down in Battle

Mountain as JP—you know, he was raised here and all—he was calling me all the time, if there was something he didn't like, that he wanted me to do—so I did.

Did he move up to Battle Mountain?

Well, he had been Highway Patrol for fifteen years prior to being JP down there, but had been working for the Highway Patrol out of Battle Mountain for some time before.

So, did he live up there during... Oh, he did. I want to ask you just a little bit—I know that Madge is ordained in her Church, and are you also active in the Church?

Oh, they got me down there as Steward, or something like that. But then I never asked for that [chuckles], I never volunteered.

Was that all new, a new part of your life, with your marriage, or were you already affiliated with that Church?

Well, I guess it was the only one that wasn't Catholic, around here.

Were you going there before Madge came?

Well, in this respect, Easter would come along, where the fellows would say, "Let's go to church," and that's what we'd do.

Yeah, not every week or anything. Do you go with Madge?

Oh yeah, now...

Uh-huh, every week now?

Yeah, pretty much so.

What are some of the areas of your interests besides your work? What are the things that you and Madge enjoy when you are able to get away from work?

Well, I don't know. That's kind of a hard question too—the fact that most of us just do what comes along, and make the best of it, don't complain, and that's it.

How much longer do you think you're going to work as justice of the peace?

Well, I won't be out for another year-and-a-half. I talked to Judge Hammond from Eureka the other day, and he asked me if I was gonna run again, and I said, "Hell, no!" [laughter]

What are you going to do when you retire, you and Madge? You going to travel a little bit?

Oh, I think she wants to go back to see her people in Florida

You going to go?

Oh well, I was back there before, and they were in Georgia—Georgia then, Atlanta. And of course we've been back there—Tennessee when they were there, in and out. We drove most of the time. We did fly the last time we went back there.

Is there anything that you enjoy that you haven't had time to do here around Austin that you intend to do when you retire?

Well, I enjoy just going from here out to, and going to Elko and back around.

Oh great!

I don't want to go to these bigger cities.

What do you see for the future of Austin, let's say in the next ten years?

That's hard to tell. I think it will come back alright, if the whole nation comes back.

Well, what do you see as the economy here in this region? The economy here has been mining and ranching, so do you see mining coming back?

Oh, it may. They had a uranium mine out here. It kept six families going for probably six, eight years, and then they had this little spurt out here that lasted three or four years, and it's been that way ever since I've been here.

The population hasn't changed though, hardly. In the other interviews that I'm talking with people, it's remained four-hundred, it's about three-fifty now, right?

Yeah, I think so.

Do you think the younger generation are going to stay here when there's not much of an economy in this region?

Well, I think those that were raised here will stay, pretty well. People that come in and have children, or boys and girls of high school age, they may marry here, you know, and if work goes, they're gonna go too. But those that live here, you know, are raised here pretty much...

What about their children?

Well, that's another story, because times change everything, you know. Austin has changed considerable over the years.

Because there's not many businesses on the street?

They're slowed down.

Slowed down. Do you think there'll be more traffic coming through [Highway] 50 that might pick up? Someone mentioned that maybe because Kingston is a vacation area, that maybe that would bring some economy into Austin. Do they come in here to shop from Kingston?

Well, right now I don't think they do, I think they go down to Hadley or Round Mountain, which is only about thirty miles, which is same as this. A lot of people don't like to come over the summit at all.

Yes, because it's a mountain.

Down there they can just go down to Hadley, a half-an-hour they're there.

And then the other thing that I see in the interviews is the problem of the medical care, because you have to travel, and if there's emergencies it's pretty tough.

Yeah, this is the biggest problem I think that we have.

There's no real solution?

If they had more of *that*, and if there was even a doctor here, why...

It would solve so many problems.

A lot of people that come in here, they'd feel...

Especially retired people?

Yeah.

What do you do when you have to go to the doctor? Where do you go?

Oh, Fallon, Battle Mountain. They got two doctors in Battle Mountain now, that's the most they've ever had there.

There's a woman dentist there, and in Fallon a woman doctor.

Yes, right.

What happens if there's an emergency?

The ambulance and their attendees, I guess.

Are they right in town with the Fire Department?

Oh yeah, yeah.

So they can scoot to a place. Before we end the interview—what other changes in the years that you've been here, that maybe we didn't cover, do you want to mention before we end this?

Well, you know, mining has probably been our biggest stronghold.

I read once there were ten thousand when the silver mines were active, and that's a long time ago.

Yeah, Bert Acree, who was raised here as a youngster, and he was fifty-four years or so, Auditor here, for the county, and he told me, you know, people think that... This here has all been over a period of time, you know, and they don't look at it as far back as some of the rest of us do. But he said ten thousand people was in a thirty-mile radius. So it you go sixty

miles, that would be Kingston, north to over here at...Which would make a big difference in the amount of people there were in our area.

The train doesn't come through now, right?

No, no. But I've always thought that if there was a railroad coming down from Battle Mountain to Austin, like some places in Colorado where they have these trains going, you know, these little oldtimers.

Oh yeah, like a tourist kind of thing, scenic.

Yes. By gosh, it would be a different set-up around here entirely.

Costs so much money now to do those things.

Yeah.

Well, it sounds like you've had a very varied and very productive life, and you have a wonderful wife, and I am just delighted to be able to interview you, look forward to interviewing Madge, and wish you both many years of good health and contentment together. I want to thank you, on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, for sharing your life with us. Thank you very much.

Well, thank you, glad to. I've been telling everybody else about certain little stories, you know, through the years, but this is one of the first time I ever went as far as this.

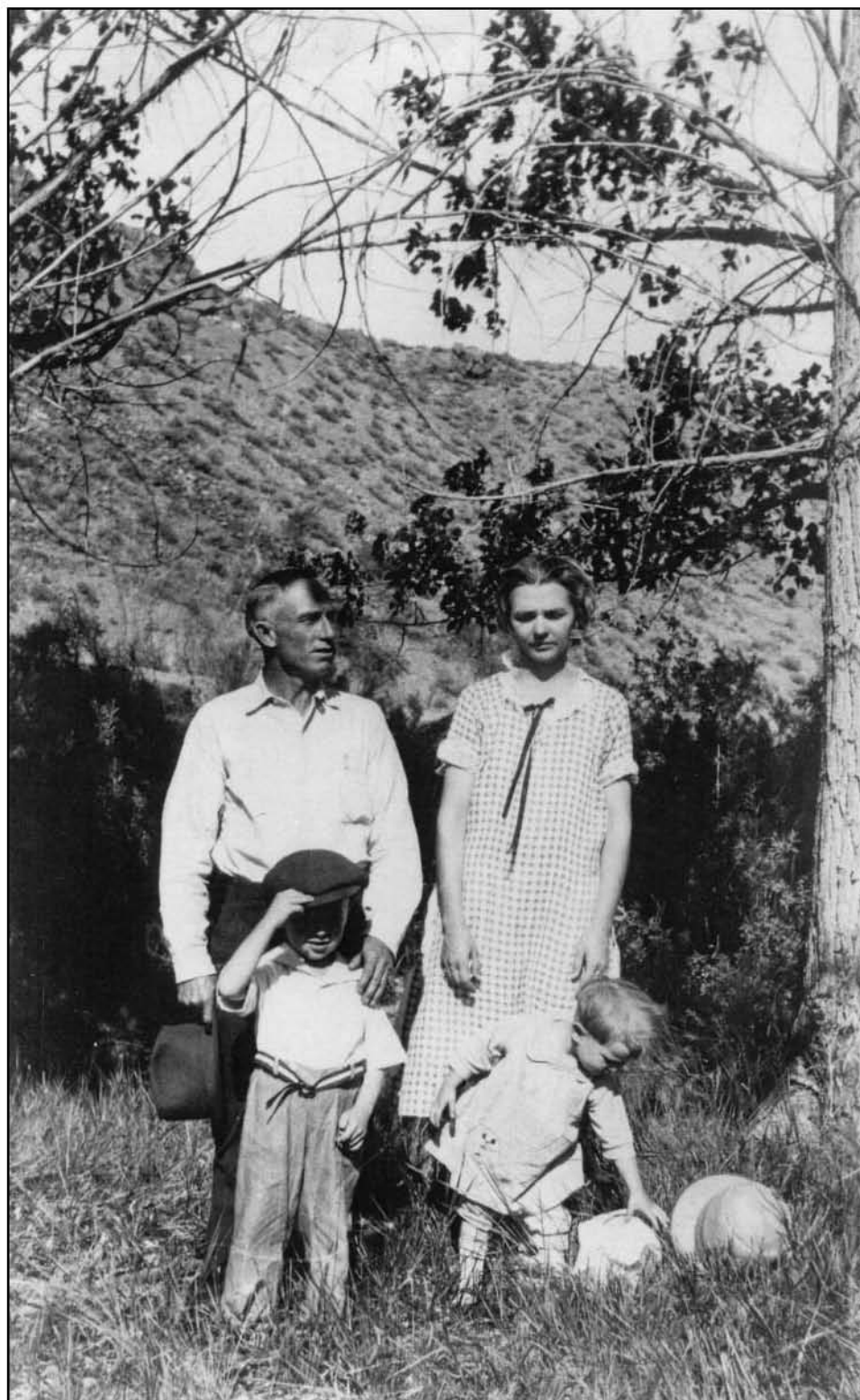
[chuckles] Well, this is a real interview, and this is the end of Frank's interview.

FRANK BERTRAND
PHOTOGRAPHS



FRANK BERTRAND
MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Matthew (Matt) Bertrand, Charlotte (Lottie) Allen Bertrand,
Frank Allen Bertrand, Estelle Bertrand, ca. 1926.

(Original photograph owned by family)



Frank Bertrand and father Matthew, Cortez, Nevada, ca. 1936.

(Original photograph owned by Frank Bertrand)

FRANK BERTRAND

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, they have been reformatted, a process that was completed in early 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

MADGE BERTRAND

PREFACE

Madge Bertrand was born in Missouri in 1921 and lived on the family ranch until she was twenty-five. The family moved to California during the war where more work was available. Madge worked for the telephone company in Sacramento. She came on a visit to Austin, Nevada with her daughter and son-in-law Gene to go deer hunting with his friend, Frank Bertrand. Madge's first comment when she saw Austin was, "Do you mean to tell me people really live in this place?" They all went to a Halloween dance the first evening, and this was the start of an immediate attraction with a wedding three months later. Frank helped her move from Sacramento to Austin.

Madge started to become a part of the community when she was invited to St. George's Episcopal Church. She taught Sunday school classes and later became a lay reader since they only had a visiting priest once a month. She and her sister-in-law Estelle Shanks, studied three years under a priest and became ordained in 1988. She, Estelle and

Essie Strickland, who is a lay reader, take turns each Sunday to conduct the church services.

Madge worked at many job cleaning motels, working at a variety store and in the grocery store. She decided to open her own place in the seventies. Frank had bought an old building with a few hardware items and some lumber. Then he was appointed justice of the peace and couldn't develop the store. Madge went down every day, sat on the steps and did her embroidery, and people started to come and ask for things. Before long, Madge developed a very successful business. The mines were thriving, and her store was the only place where people could get the items she stocked which included over-the-counter medications, boots, kitchen utensils, etc. They sold the store in 1992 to a local man.

Madge also became active in several organizations: The American Legion Auxiliary and Eastern Star and is active in the Senior Center. She was also president of the Chamber of Commerce. Madge came as a stranger and a new bride, and now everybody knows and loves her. She has contributed so much to Austin.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Madge Bertrand at her home in Austin, Nevada, May 11, 1993.

Good afternoon, Madge. I'm so pleased to be here to interview you today. Could you give us your full name?

Madge Bertrand: Madge (Madgelene) Irene Bertrand.

And where and when were you born?

At
Walnut Shade in Missouri, May 12, 1921.

Tell me a little bit about your grandfather. First your mother's father. Where did he live, where was he born?

My mother's father was John Carter Palmer, and he was born in Galena, Missouri.

And what about your father's father?

He was Joseph Ingenthron, and he was born in Hamburg, Germany.

Did you grandfather spend all of his life in Germany?

No, he came to America when he was a young man.

Before he married?

Yes.

Do you know what brought him to America?

Well, I think that they just were like a lot of people: they wanted to come to a new country.

Aha. Now, did he come with his parents?

Yes.

And where did they settle?

I believe they settled around Chicago. I'm not sure. I know we had relatives there.

So they knew someone before they came

.

Yeah.

Where did your grandfather meet your grandma?

In Taney County, Missouri, I believe.

So he married an American woman in Missouri.

Yes.

Then tell me just about your mother's parents. Where did they live?

They lived at Walnut Shade, Missouri.

Then I want to know a little bit about when you were born. Where were you born?

I was born at Walnut Shade, Missouri.

How long did you live there?

Until I was about three years old, and then we moved up. We still had the address, Walnut Shade, Missouri, but we lived on a ranch after.

So you experienced ranch life?

Yes.

Tell me some of the things you did as a young person living on a ranch.

Oh, we had milk cows and we would take the cows out and herd them where they could eat. And we had sheep, we had chickens, we had pigs, and we had to help take care of them. And we'd go pull weeds for the pigs in the summertime. [laughs]

How old were you when you started these chores?

Oh, I was probably around five or six. I was always tagging along with Mom and Dad, whatever.

Did you have any sisters or brothers?

I had two sisters, older.

So you were kind of the baby of the family.

Yes, I was.

How long did you live there on that ranch?

I lived there until I was twenty-five.

Oh, that's amazing! What did you do at twenty-five?

We moved to California. Or rather, we went there. My folks were working in the fruit there.

Oh, your whole family went to California?

Yes.

Was it economic conditions that made them move to California?

It was during the war. They needed help. Normally, people as old as Dad and Mother couldn't get work. But during that wartime, it was a good time for them to work and they got to see the country as well.

And you went with them?

Yes.

How long did you stay in California?

I stayed there until I came to Austin, which was 1960.

We want to move you to Austin—however, just give me a brief little outline of the kinds of things that you did until you came to Nevada.

I worked in Thornton Canning Company in Thornton, California. Then we moved to Sacramento and I worked for the telephone company.

Aha! So you were a working gal! Now, what brought you to Nevada?

We just came on a visit, my daughter and her husband and I.

Oh, you have a daughter, so you must have gotten married?

Yes.

When did you get married to the father of your daughter?

Well, that was when I was fifteen years old, back in Missouri. My girls—I had three of them—they were all by my first husband.

So you had three daughters. Which daughter did you come out to Nevada with? You said you came on a visit.

With Barbara.

Was she living in Nevada?

Yes, she was. She was living at Fallon.

Oh! She was living in Fallon! Did she marry a Nevada man?

He was originally from Missouri, but he was out here and he was working for the State Highway.

Oh, and she moved out here with him. And so you came to visit her?

Yes.

And how did you ever get to Austin?

We came up to go deer hunting. It was deer season, and my son-in-law wanted to come up here.

Tell me about it.

He knew Frank Bertrand, the man that I later married.

How did he know him?

They had worked on the State Highway together. And so he wanted to come up and see him, and go deer hunting.

And you were there as a visitor?

Yes.

So I want you to give me some detailed description of your arrival in Austin. It must have looked different than any other place you'd ever been.

Yes, I remember that we rented a motel room down at Pony Canyon. And I looked out the window and I said, "Do you mean to tell me people really live in this place?!" [laughter]

Had your son-in-law been here before?

Yes.

Had your daughter?

Yes.

Oh, they had. Did they try to describe it to you?

No! [laughs] They probably just laughed at me.

Now, what did the main street here of Austin look like? What year did you first come when you visited?

That was 1959.

In 1959, what was Austin like?

Well, it just looked kind of like an old ghost town. And it was pretty much the same as it is now, except the Austin Hotel was still standing—it hadn't burned then. It was interesting.

What time of year was it that you were here?

In the fall of the year.

Was it kind of pretty, in a way?

Yes.

Now, tell me your first meeting with Frank.

He came down to the motel. They were having a dance that night. I believe it was a Halloween dance, and Gene, my son-in-law, brought him down to the motel to meet me.

Was this kind of prearranged?

No.

Did they have in mind that they wanted you to meet him?

Yes, they did. I think they did want me to meet him.

But they didn't tell you?

No. My daughter had told me previously that she would like for me to meet him.

He came down. Did he invite you to the dance?

Yes. We all went to the dance.

Oh, you all went to the dance. What was your first impression of Frank?

I thought he was very nice, rather handsome.

Did you kind of click, the two of you, on that visit?

Oh, I think so.

You both danced?

I wasn't a very good dancer, but yes, we tried. [laughs]

Okay. Now, from there, begin to tell me how this friendship grew until you married, because then you had to go back somewhere—you were living in Sacramento.

Yes, I was living in Sacramento, working for the telephone company. And we just corresponded.

How long did you stay that first visit in Austin, that deer hunting visit?

Oh, I think a couple of days and nights, probably.

A couple of days. But you kind of liked each other right away?

Yes.

So then you corresponded. And then tell me from there what evolved to bring you here to Austin to get married?

Well, he asked me to come up to visit. He wanted me to come Christmas, and I couldn't get off from work, because the type of work I did, I worked holidays sometimes. And that was my turn to work Christmas. So I came later.

What was later? When was that?

First part of January.

Ooo, in the mid-winter!

So he met me in Reno, and then he asked me to marry him.

Right then?!

[laughs heartily] And so we were married in Winnemucca that same visit, on the eighth of January! [laughs]

That is amazing! You just flipped for each other. Well, when you came on that second visit, and through the letters, if you said "yes," you must have developed a stronger feeling through the letters?

Yes.

Phone calls too?

Yes, we talked over the phone.

Got to know each other a little bit.

Yes, uh-huh.

So he met you and it was mid-winter. How did it seem here in mid-winter? I mean, Sacramento doesn't get the same kind of winters. How did it seem?

Cold!

When you said "yes," and you realized you'd be living in Austin, did you have any qualms at all?

No.

None. So that means you really cared about each other. And you got married right then?

Yes, and then he went back to Sacramento with me. But he was working for the Water Department, and while he was down there, the water pipes all froze up in Austin [chuckles] and he had to come home. And also, his uncle

died, and he had to come home and take his mother and step-dad to the funeral, and it was terribly, terribly cold.

Oh! What did you live in, in Sacramento? An apartment or a house?

I had a house. We were buying a home there.

Who is "we"?

Well, my husband that died, and I, were.

Oh. How long before your meeting Frank did your husband die?

He died in 1957, in July.

And then you met Frank that same year?

No, 1959.

Oh, two years later. So that was a very dramatic move for you to make.

Yes.

How did you handle packing up and all that?

Oh, we got Bekins Moving, and they did it all for me. [laughs]

And did Frank have a place here when you moved?

Yes.

And where was that?

It was behind the grocery store down there, in that terrible-lookin' old house! It was an awful-lookin' old house. [laughs]

How did you feel about that?

I don't think I really cared. You see, I was brought up in a very poor time, when we never had great houses or anything, so it didn't bother me.

You weren't spoiled! He found the right gal to come here. So tell me, here in a strange town, you didn't know anyone but Frank, right?

Well, I had met his sister and quite a few people at the dance.

Oh, I see. And I just learned today that Estelle [Shanks] is his sister—I didn't realize that. So tell me a little bit about the first couple of weeks when you were getting settled—in as a new bride. Tell me about that.

Oh, I think I just kind of took life easy. I didn't go out or anything, because I had been working all those years, and it was just nice just to kind of relax.

It probably was a lot of work getting your household put in shape. Did he have furniture?

No. He probably did have some, but...

So it was mainly yours?

I moved all my furniture.

Uh-huh, and getting settled. So then begin to tell me how you became a part of the community—first the very early weeks or months.

Well, it was quite a while, probably a few months, before I really became acquainted and started going to St. George's Church.

How did you start to go there?

Well, the lady that was in charge of the church then, invited me, and said that she needed help. So since I wasn't doing anything else [laughs] it was nice to do.

Who was the lady?

Her name was Avis Haskell.

Does she still live here?

No. No, she was hired by the church, and she left not too long afterward, and we had a series of different people.

What kind of church? What denomination?

Episcopal.

And what were some of the things you did to help her?

Oh, taught Sunday School classes, and helped...She had quite a group of young people, and so [I] helped keep them in hand, kind of, you know.

And it made you feel useful. Did you start to meet the parents and other grownups?

Yes.

And did Frank introduce you around to people?

Yes, he did.

So then start to tell me about your life here. You were part of the church. How else did you become acquainted and part of the community? Because I see now, everybody knows you.

[chuckles] Yes! Well, there was the American Legion Auxiliary that was active at that time.

Where do you fit in the American Legion?

I joined the Auxiliary because Frank belonged to the American Legion.

Oh, that's right!

And so *they* had Thanksgiving dinners. They'd have big dinners and you'd go and have a good time. They put me in right away as president of that thing, and I didn't know beans about it. But that's the way the do here! [laughs] They're all tired of it and they want somebody else to do it for a while.

They recognized your abilities! And was it a pretty hard, cold winter that winter? Did you find that difficult after California?

No. It was cold, but I didn't mind.

And was there any time in that early period when you wondered, "What in the world did I do?!"?

Yes. [laughs] Of course!

What did you miss? What was hard?

Well, I just knew that I *had* a good job down there, and that I could have retired. But I didn't really miss the work, but I did give up a good retirement. And Frank was gone a lot. He started to work for the Forest Service, and I {e was gone a lot, and he worked hard and he was tired and he was crabby. [laughs] And I *did* wonder, yeah! [laughter]

So how did you overcome that? Did you get into things that you really loved, finally, so that you could have part of your own life?

Yes. Well, we bought a little house, and moved into it in the spring. So we weren't in that old house very long. Of course none of the houses are new here, but it was a little better. Then, I think it was 1962 that my daughter and her baby came to live with us.

They did?!

Yes.

Where did they come from?

They came from California.

Was that a breakup of a marriage?

Yes.

Was that okay with Frank?

Yes, he loved the baby. He'd take care of her while May and I'd go places.

So that was kind of nice! Because some men wouldn't want a little baby in the house. And he never had a family.

No.

So that was nice. Did your family become his family?

I think so—especially May and Melanie.

How long did they stay with you?

Well, gosh, they stayed...Melanie had a hard time in school—she had a mental problem. When she was about seven, she was put in a foster home.

Oh, how sad.

But May was with us off and on, and has been until just recently.

Does she live here?

She lives down in California right now.

And so then what other things did you slowly start getting into?

We worked in the motel, May and I.

Which motel?

Pony Canyon.

Really?!

We'd take Melanie, the baby, and she'd run off. So we tied her up down there [laughs] while we worked.

No play pen?

Now, we'd get arrested for child abuse!

How old was she then?

Oh, she was about three, I guess.

A kid doesn't want to be just alone with two grownups in a motel. So you kind of acted as managers? or helpers?

We did the cleaning in the motel.

Well, good for you both. And Frank didn't mind if you did that?

I guess not. He didn't say so [laughs] if he did!

And then what else did you start to do? How long did you do that, the motel work?

Oh, I think five or six years or more. After the Pony Canyon we worked at the Lincoln.

And how many hours would you spend doing that?

Oh, four or five a day, with the two of us, you know.

How long, during that first time, did May stay with you?

Oh, she was with us most of the time.

Oh really?!

She finally married this fellow that she's with now, but they just keep breaking up, kind of, because May has mental problems.

Oh, how sad. You're so good, and Frank's so good...

He's been very good about May.

And so then, gradually, how did your life evolve into the activities and the wonderful life you have now? How did it then start after the motel work? What were the next things that you got into?

[chuckles] I went to work at the variety store that's now TJ's Sharpening Shop. There was a variety store there.

Is that right?!

And I worked there.

As a salesperson or cashier?

Yes, both. [chuckles]

How many hours or days did you work there?

Well, I'd work six days a week, and probably eight hours a day.

Oh, my goodness! So that kept you very busy. But then I bet you met everybody!

Yes, I did.

Did you love it?

Yes, I did. I worked a little bit in the grocery store. And then decided to open my *own* place. Frank had already started it, but then...

What year was that?

I really can't remember. I think it was in the early seventies, probably.

Now you say he had already started it. I thought he was real busy with all his jobs.

[laughs] He was, but he bought this old building, and he had put a few hardware things, and a little lumber and this and that in there.

Did he think he was going to handle that store? Is that before he became justice of the peace?

It was kind of during the time. I think he had these things in there, and then he got to be justice of the peace.

But he started the store before he got that?

Yeah.

So then tell me what happened with that development of the store.

I would have to go down there and answer the phone. People would call me, "Have you got this, or that?" and I'd go down.

Let's back up a little bit. Frank had started it. Did he start it before he married you?

Oh no.

So was the idea yours and his? Did you both talk?

I don't think so! He's got this way of buying things, and he doesn't ask. And I get kind of angry about it sometimes.

So he got the store. And then...

He thought it was a good buy, this building. He got it for almost nothing [chuckles], he said. By then, we had rentals, and so he said, "Well, we can buy this stuff on wholesale." So that was his idea I don't think he intended to expand very much.

He just thought maybe he'd sell it later?

Probably.

So then tell me what you did.

So I went down and set on the steps and did my embroidery and just waited for people to come, instead of having to have them call on the phone.

Who stocked this? Who got the stuff that was in this store? Who bought it? Frank?

Yes, he did it first.

Okay. So tell me what he stocked it with—the early period, before it grew a whole lot. What

was in it when you started to get calls? What'd you have—a phone number on the door? If someone wanted something, they'd call you?

MB. Yes.

Okay, what was in it?

Some nails and a few tools and pipe fittings and pipe.

Like a little hardware?

A little lumber. Yeah.

Was it the same size building that's there now?

Yes.

So then you took your little chair, and did people come by?

Yes. And they kept saying, "Well, can you get this?" or "can you get that?" So I'd try! [laughs]

How would you get the things they wanted?

Well, at first we'd go to Reno. There was a J.R. Bradley Company, and they had salesmen that came by. And they would send stuff out to us. Then later on we got True Value.

Explain what you mean when you say "We got True Value in there."

You had to sign up and buy a small amount of stock.

Was this a chain? Is True Value a chain?

Yes, it is.

Through what states? I've never heard of it, until now.

It's all over the United States now.

But when you first got it, was it mainly in the West? or Nevada?

Their headquarters were in Chicago.

So how did you connect with them? Tell me, from the very beginning, how'd you hear about them, and how'd you connect with them?

I really can't remember. I think we probably saw an advertisement. Anyway, we called them up, and they came out and signed us up. We had to buy ten shares of "A" stock, I think they called it. We had kind of checked into some of the *other* hardware companies that do this same sort of thing, like Ace and that, and you had to have a lot more investment. And with True Value, we didn't have to have quite so much investment.

And you buy the stuff from them?

Yeah. We didn't have to altogether, no.

But you could use their name?

Yes, uh-huh.

And then tell me, after you did that, how the store developed. What was your role and how did it develop?

[laughs] Well, I did most everything: I did the ordering...

Did you order from requests from people, or knowing the town by then?

Well, pretty much. You were supposed to order so much, or else you have to pay extra, you see.

In other words, they did require then, a minimum purchase?

Yes, they did.

So tell me, did you do that on your own? Or would you consult with Frank?

Oh yes. He would help me with the ordering, because a lot of times we'd have to do it in the evening, if we didn't have time. By that time, we were getting busier.

Were you real busy?

Not real busy, but we were busy.

Was that in the early sixties?

No, seventies. Probably kind of by then it was the late seventies.

Was the town busier then, that you had so much business? Or was it just everyone here needed so much and never had it available before?

No, the mining industry would come and go. And when the mines were doing pretty good, then the business was doing better, you see.

So the mines were doing pretty good in that time period, in the seventies?

Yes, uh-huh.

And tell me some of the things that you stocked in that store, and about the lumber part too.

Oh, mostly just all kinds of repair parts for plumbing and that sort of thing. We weren't able to get, like I was later on, the variety items and stuff. But always, I tried to stock medicines because there wasn't anybody that had them. And so there was a place in Reno at that time—I can't remember the name of that little company—that would send out.

You mean over-the-counter medications?

Yes, over-the-counter medications.

Uh-huh, especially with no health center here.

Yes, that was really needed here.

That was so smart!

And I always tried to have that for them.

Was that your idea?

I guess it must have been, yes. [chuckles]

That was very smart. What were some of the other innovative ideas you had that you put into this business?

Oh, I tried to sell boots in the winter, especially when the mines were working, and they needed those hard-toed boots.

Where would you order them?

From Salt Lake. There was a company in Salt Lake that I could get them from.

How did you find out where these companies were?

Well there was a salesman came through. [laughs]

Oh, really?!

And so I got acquainted with him, and I always liked all the salesmen, most of them. We got along real well. [laughter]

That's great! So what were your hours at this store?

Nine to five.

Would Frank run over on lunch hour? You were so close to the courthouse!

Yes.

Would you be able to close at lunchtime so you could get some lunch, or close it if you had to, for a little bit—put up a sign?

Well, when I had someone helping me, I always did.

Did you finally get busy enough to get someone?

Yes, I had a girl usually helping me.

Like a high school girl?

No, an older lady, usually.

So you could get time off for your other activities?

Yes.

How about the lumber part of it? How busy was that?

It was pretty good, but Frank would go to Reno and get the lumber. We weren't able to get lumber from True Value at that time at

all—no lumber whatsoever. So he'd go and bring a load. We always had a truck.

Did that sell pretty good?

Yes.

And when were you able to start to put in things that I know you were involved with before you sold it, and that's like the kitchen utensils and coffee pots and dishes and kids' toys? When did all that stuff come?

Well, I started getting that from some of the hardware places in Sacramento and Salt Lake City. That was before True Value had them. And then later on, True Value had all these neat things.

Oh, they were smart!

Then I could order from them.

And then were you free to set whatever price to sell? Or did True Value set the selling prices?

They had a selling price, but you didn't have to stick with it. And in a lot of cases, I wasn't able to, because I would have gone broke. [laughs]

Yes, sure, because people, the economy, better to sell it for a little less.

They have all these flyers that they send out. I didn't ever subscribe to them, I didn't have that many people. But people would see 'em and they would wonder, they'd say, "Well, where's the bargain?" But I just simply told them, "I can't afford to do that. I don't have that many customers, you know." And so I would keep it probably at the regular price, instead of the sale price.

Oh, sure. Was it a successful business financially?

Well, it got so it was. There was a few winters when we had to borrow money to keep going, because winters are tough here.

Oh, gee! I imagine it served the community, because they'd need things, they couldn't wait until they went into a big city.

Yes, a lot of emergency plumbing and stuff like that. They often told me how glad they were that we had the store there.

How long did you keep the business?

I'm not too sure of that Frank's better at that than I am, I think. But it's probably, I think fifteen years that I was there. So it was before then, you know, that *he* had it. So it was probably around twenty altogether from the time we bought the building.

He had it before you worked in it?

Yes. He bought it himself, and *started* this little business. Then I poked my nose in! [laughs]

When he got to be justice of the peace, probably. Is that it?

Yeah, after that. You see, he was gone so much, and people always called here.

So you sold it not long ago?

Yes, in October of last year.

I see. And who did you sell that to?

Jay Winrod.

And is Jay Winrod an Austin native?

Yes, he is.

So it's not very long ago that you no longer devoted so much time to the business.

That's right.

I know that you became very active in the church. We're going to go back now, drop the business for a while, and go back to the other facets of your life, because I know what an active woman you are. Tell me how your activities in the church progressed.

I became a lay reader, I think probably around 1965—I'm not too sure.

Now tell those of us who don't know what that is, how did you become a lay reader, and why?

The church gives you a license to do the services. You read the morning or evening prayer, whichever it is. Then you just lead the people in the service.

Is that because they don't have a regular minister hired?

Yes, they'd probably have a priest come out once a month, and the rest of the time we kept the church doors open, and had services every Sunday.

Is that common in all the churches in Austin, that there's no full-time minister or priest?

Well, no, it was with the Catholic and the Episcopal Church, and that was all there was when I first came, was the Catholic and the Episcopal Church.

Did the Catholics have a full-time priest?

No, they came about once a month, or maybe not that often.

What did you have to do to become a lay reader?

I took instructions from a priest that was here at the time.

How long did he stay to give instruction?

I can't remember how often he came. It seemed like he came almost every Sunday there for a while.

But how long a period did you have to work with him to be trained?

Oh, probably six months.

You mean six months just on Sunday when he'd come? or did he stay here?

Yeah, on Sundays.

So it would be whenever he would come?

Maybe he would stay over, and we'd have class.

How many took his classes?

There was three of us started out, when I started: Essie Strickland was one of them, and one dropped out, so then there was Essie and I.

How long did it take before you "passed" so you could lead the service?

Well, they had us just doing as we went along. And we had to—I remember I had to write a sermon.

Oh my!

And we had a pretty big crowd that day, and I was terribly nervous. [laughs] And I had to give my sermon that I wrote. [laughs]

Did you enjoy that activity?

I was very nervous. Well, yes, I think you get a blessing. The more work you do for the Lord, the more [laughs] blessings you get.

So I understand you then became ordained?

Yes.

What year was that when you finally...

That was 1988.

And what kind of training did you need or what was the procedure to become ordained?

We studied—Estelle and I did it together, my sister-in-law.

In other words, she became a lay reader too?

MB. Yes, she had been, yes.

Oh, she had been.

She didn't go through the same studies that we did, because she wasn't living here at the time. But then she did when she came back to Austin. She was a lay reader too.

Was she a lay reader in other places that she lived?

I don't know. I don't think so.

So then the two of you became ordained. So what was that training like?

We studied for about three years under a priest that came out from Fallon. And we studied the Old Testament and the New Testament and all the different Church procedures and how to baptize and how to [chuckles] marry people, and how to bury the dead.

Oh my! Did you have to take a test?

Yes, we did.

What was the test like?

Well, it was hard for me, because it seemed like I just couldn't think.

Scary.

Yeah.

Was it a written test? or oral? or both?

Mine was oral, but Estelle took hers written.

And who was it that you had to go to, to take this test?

MB. There was three members of the clergy.

They came here?

There was one lady deacon and two priests.

And they came here?

Yes.

Of course you both were ordained.

Yes.

What's the ceremony when you're ordained?

Oh, the bishop has to do it—the Bishop of the State of Nevada.

And where do you go for that?

We were ordained in our own little church.

Is it with an audience?

Oh yes, the church was full. They couldn't even all get inside.

Oh my!

And we march in, and we kneel down, and we are asked questions. I can't remember what they are. And then the bishop lays his hands on you, and tells that you are ordained priests. This is handed down from we believe, Jesus Christ himself. And the laying-on of hands has gone on from when he laid his hands on the disciples, all through our church.

Oh, so that was a very emotional experience.

Yes, it was.

Did they give you a robe, or any certain things to wear?

Yes, we had a priest that made us a white robe that we wear.

You do. So one day I want to go into the church with you and get a picture of you at the pulpit with your robe.

Okay.

And so now, what is the procedure of services? You have two ordained. Tell me when you conduct services.

At four o'clock on Sunday.

How do you take turns?

Oh, well [chuckles], we have one lay reader: Essie's still a lay reader. She does just the evening prayer. And then Estelle and I, we take, each one of us, one Sunday, however it falls. Essie, Estelle, and I. And then we have holy communion. We're ordained, so... The Episcopal Church was quite concerned because there *wasn't* holy communion every Sunday. And that's one of the reasons that they ordain ministers out of each congregation. That's what their total ministry, they're trying to do.

Is it only recent that women were ordained? In so many churches, women—and we just saw that recently—weren't allowed to be ordained, Is this new?

Yes, it is fairly new.

Are you two of the first women to be ordained?

No. Jean Orr in Pioche was the first one in Nevada that was ordained Priest.

Then I wanted to ask, you said four o'clock. Usually you think of church in the morning. Is this a practice of the church, that they don't have a morning service, but they have a four o'clock afternoon service?

The reason this evolved was, we had a priest that came once a month, you see.

Oh, traveling.

And he would have services somewhere else in the morning, and then come to Austin for the afternoon. So in order to have him come, we just about had to do that.

So then even though he was no longer coming it was a custom to keep it up? People like that hour?

Yes. He still comes once a month. We have a priest that comes.

Two questions: How many belong to the church, and how many attend services, when it's not a holiday?

We probably have about forty that belong, and we have six or eight.

Do any of the men come?

Yes.

And how is it on the holidays, like Easter and Christmas. Do you have a Christmas mass?

Yes.

And how many come when it's a holiday?

Oh, I'd say fifty.

That's good-sized. And do you have a Sunday School?

No. We've tried that time and time again, but there just aren't enough Episcopalians, and they're *not* constant about bringing their children. You'd prepare something for them, and they didn't show up. It's just been kind of hard. The Baptists have a pretty good Sunday School.

When did the other churches come to town? Like the Baptists? And what others? First it was just the Catholic and the Episcopal. When did the others come?

Well, right after we were married, Frank worked for the Forest Service and his boss was a Mormon. And they had services at their home. And they kind of started the Mormon Church that way. And then they finally bought a little old house, over where the church is now. And eventually they tore that little house down that they had used, and built that beautiful church. They have a beautiful church there.

Was that in the sixties?

When the Mormons first started? Yeah.

And when did they build that church?

Oh, I imagine it's about ten years old.

Oh, so fairly new.

Yeah.

I saw a sign now that there's a Baptist church.

Yes.

And when did that come, in?

I think that probably came in the eighties.

Oh, so they're very recent. Are there enough people for a congregation?

Yes, they have quite a good congregation.

Tell me, did you join any organizations or get active in any others besides the American Legion in Austin?

I was in Eastern Star when I came to Austin, so I affiliated with Elective Chapter Number Two here, and have been a member all these years. I was Grand Chaplain in 1968 and traveled with Florence Layton of Battle Mountain, around a lot of the state, and visited a lot of the chapters.

Oh, how interesting! Tell me about Eastern Star. What is their main activity? What is the main thing that they do in Eastern Star? Do they have some specific area of their work?

We are the women's organization—we're not a *part* of the Masonic Lodge, but we support them in their work, and you have to be a relative of a Mason in order to be an Eastern Star. They support the Cancer Society and all those, and we give money to them. And they have an organization that they call ESTARL which is a religious organization for education, just religious education, and they give scholarships to people for religious education.

Where do you get the money to give to these places? Where do you raise the money? How do you raise the money?

We mostly just give. They do sell pins and different sorts of things in other, bigger chapters, but we never have.

You mean they ask for donations from the members?

Yes.

Whatever you can give? Or is there an amount?

Well this last time that our Worthy Grand Matron was here, they make an official visit. They are the Grand Matron of

the whole state, so they make their official visit, and they have projects. And one of them is always ESTARL. We usually give—I think this time she had seven projects, and we gave seventy dollars to all of them, ten dollars each.

Is that each person?

No, just our chapter. And each chapter in the state does this. And so then they have enough to give scholarships for these young people, and they give the rest of the money, like, to the Cancer Society, to the Eye Foundation, and to children's organizations. You know, Cripple Children's, and all those different kinds of organizations. And then they *had* an Eastern Star Home for elderly Eastern Star people that could no longer take care of themselves. They tried to save money to get a building and do all this, but Nevada's so small, that they never were able to. So now they just kind of supplement their income with that money.

I see. What are the dues?

Our dues are only six dollars a year, but they're very low. They're the lowest [chuckles] probably in the state.

So when they're going to give seventy dollars, do you each chip in a few dollars? Is that how you do it?

Yes. Well, see, every meeting we have a plate, just like a church. We call it the "Dime March," but it's long since become a Dollar March, really. [laughter]

You each put in what you can?

Yes.

What other organizations have you gotten involved with?

Well, I've been in the Chamber of Commerce. I was President of the Chamber of Commerce at one time.

Wow, that's a big responsibility!

[laughs] Too much!

What year was that, that you were president?

I really don't remember. It's been probably about eight or ten years ago.

While you still ran the store—so you were a businessperson?

Yes.

How many belonged to the Chamber of Commerce when you were president?

Oh, most all the businesses in town, and then some of the local people that didn't even have a business would pay dues.

How many people would that be?

Ah, I would say probably twenty or twenty-five.

What other kinds of activities do you get yourself involved with?

I think that's just about it. I can't remember anything else.

In the years that you've been here—you came as a stranger and a new bride, and now I know everybody knows you, and you're a very loving person who loves people. From your

observation, tell me how you think Austin has changed from the time you first arrived to now. What are the major changes that you lived through and that you can tell us about?

Well, I think one thing, when I first came, I know *everybody* knew Frank. There was a lot of old families still here. But so many of them have passed away, and there's just remnants of them. A lot of the people now are from other places—they're not really Austinites, although we still have quite a few. But I have noticed that difference—different people moving in and out. It's always in and out, you know. And then, let's see, since I've been here, they built a new fire house.

Uh-huh, very nice.

And they have built that new Mormon church. Let's see, what else have they...And there's been a few new houses built: Louis and Liz Lani built a new house. Lilian and Bert Gandolfo have a lovely new home. And then down on Main Street, Nick Schmidt built the new post office since I've been here, and his home next to it. And the building next to it was formerly the Forest Service Office, but it's empty now.

Now who lives in the house next to the post office? The postmaster?

No, that's Nick Schmidt's wife. He built the post office. And he leased it to the government. And she still owns the building. And then he built on the other side of his home, he built that building for the Forest Service, and they had to lease it so many years. But after their lease run out, you see, they went down below town and built a Forest Service Building.

Who's in that facility?

It's empty, and it's a very nice office building.

And they also built that nice recreation center.

Yes, the Senior Center.

Well, and besides the Senior Center, that park and swimming pool.

Oh yes, that was during the time that Bert Gandolfo was county commissioner. And that was his project.

Need some things for the young people.

Yes. And then the new school they built down on the road to Battle Mountain.

So there's been some progress. But what has closed since you first came? because there's a lot of closed places on Main Street. What was here and is no longer here?

Well, the little variety store, which I thought was a very nice thing to have. And of course I tried with my little hardware store to be *part* variety, as much as I could get in there. Let me see...

The Austin Hotel burned down.

Yeah, the Austin Hotel burned. At one time there was...Oh, the bank! That's one of the most important things—we have no bank. They took it out.

They couldn't make a financial success of it?

Oh, I don't know. They just took it out of here and moved it to Battle Mountain, and wanted everybody just to move their accounts to Battle Mountain. Most everybody

in Austin's kind of stubborn [chuckles] and they wouldn't move their accounts to Battle Mountain!

So where do you bank?

We bank at First Interstate in Fallon, and most people do, I think! And you can also go to Eureka—there's a First Interstate in Eureka.

Can you do your banking by mail today?

Yes. Yes, I did a lot of mine by mail.

And you can also have checks deposited directly?

Yes, uh-huh.

So that's pretty bad. Now, the other thing I see, interviewing people—and I can just envision, just from my own observance—that there's no real health care here in Austin.

No. Well, we have a lady that comes from Eureka most every week. She's a physician's assistant.

But when you're a family with young kids, and when you're older, once a week doesn't handle a lot of things.

It doesn't handle emergencies, but then we have the ambulance

But that creates a very expensive way to handle health care.

And they've got real good EMTs (emergency medical technicians) that work on the ambulance. Yeah, it is expensive.

But I mean, that creates a lot of expense for the city, for the county, for the people. Is there no

way to have a clinic here where there's someone all the time, and with a nurse or something? Has that ever been explored?

It's always been felt that it wouldn't pay, they couldn't make it.

To have one nurse?

A long time ago, we *had* a registered nurse here that gave shots and stuff, and she was always available for people. But she divorced her husband [chuckles] and moved away. And she just recently died this last year, bless her heart. We loved her so much.

I've talked with people who are planning to leave in their old age because they can't, really, when you're real elderly, go it alone, go chasing so far. That, to me, seems probably the most major handicap to bringing people to live here—young people or older people.

I think it is. And then, you know, I think that the high altitude is real hard on the older people. And so many of them, once they leave here, they can't come back because they just can't live here any more.

That's right. You know, for a place where people want to stay and have to leave, it makes it pretty hard.

Yes.

When you first came, was there a doctor here?

No.

Did you find that created a concern?

Well, no, I didn't think too much about it. [chuckles]

You were young and healthy?

Well, we took May and her baby to the doctor, but I used to could drive that and it didn't bother me. I can't do it any more.

And then if it's a snowy mountain road... These are mountain roads.

Yeah. And Frank would always make himself available if it was such that I felt I couldn't do it. He was very helpful.

That looks like a hardship. What do you foresee in the next decade, as Austin's future?

Oh, I think it won't change very much. [laughs] It'll just be Austin.

It won't grow and people that live here will still...

I think there'll always be people that'll like to live in' Austin.

Uh-huh, the children of the people?

Well, maybe, and maybe just people who fall in love with this town. There has been some.

Who are the people that come, that you said don't know Frank, who aren't from families who live here, like your daughter. Who comes to live here?

It's mostly when there's kind of a mining boom, and they come here looking for work.

But do you think there are going to be mining booms?

Yes, I think there always will be. It depends on the price of gold a lot.

When was the last one here in Austin?

About five years ago.

Did it bring new people?

Yes. And they built that school on the strength of it.

I see. How many go to that school?

I really don't know.

Is that the junior high and high school?

Yes, and they've included down to the sixth grade now.

This is the elementary here, near you, in your back yard?

Yes.

And then sixth through twelfth. Do you know how many students are in either of the schools?

Probably less than 200, the whole thing.

Do they come from the ranches, too?

Yes.

Do they pick them up in school buses?

They send a bus out Reese River, I think, and then one out to Kingston. And then *some* of the children, you know, like Grace, they bring them in.

Right, like the Inchauspe's kids, they bring them in.

Yeah, but I think that the state supplements those people, you know, that have to bring their children.

And who supplies the buses? The county?

Lander County School District.

I'm sure I've forgotten to ask you some things. Is there anything more on your life in Lander County that we've missed, that you want to tell us before we end the interview?

No, I can't think of anything. I'm sure I'll think of it later! [laughs]

Well, we can always add I asked Frank, I want to ask you: when Frank, in a couple of years, retires—and now you're freer without the business—what are some of your plans? What would you like to do?

I want to get a four-wheel drive and just be able to go out and explore every little road! [laughs heartily]

That sounds like a wonderful idea. Well, I know that you have been probably the main help in Austin for this Lander County Oral History Project, and I know I could not have done it without you. So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you not only for this interview, but for all that you've done, and will be doing to help us complete this project. Thank you so much. This is the end of the interview.

Thank you, Sylvia.

MADGE BERTRAND
PHOTOGRAPHS



ESTELLE SHANKS AND MADGE BERTRAND
MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

MADGE BERTRAND

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Madge Irene Bertrand Interview

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JOY BRANDT**PREFACE**

Joy Vigus Brandt's father, Edward James Vigus, born in Cornwall England, was nine years old when he and his parents immigrated to the United States, attracted by the ranching and mining. They settled in Smoky Valley, Nevada where her grandfather's brothers were already settled. Her maternal grandparents owned a ranch near Austin where Joy's mother, Louise Streshley, was born. Edward and Louise met at dances, married in 1929 and settled in Austin. Joy was born in 1930. Although an only child, her mother always had a "passel of kids around." She describes her home life school days, and frequent visits out to the old Streshley homestead where her mother was raised. Joy frequently stayed with her grandmother and aunt at the Streshley ranch.

Joy's father worked for the Forest Service and pioneered the roads out to Kingston and other parts of Lander County. She and her mother spent many summers camping in tent

cabins at Kingston when he worked on the roads.

Joy took business courses in high school and went to Fallon for her senior year boarding with a family friend. More business courses were offered as well as a music program. She played a clarinet in the school band and sang in the glee club. After a year at a beautician's school in Reno on a scholarship, she married William Brandt, an Austin man. They bought the house which Joy still lives in for eight hundred dollars. She set up her beautician shop in their house.

Joy's mother, Louise Vigus, leased the International Cafe for a year, then she and Joy's father established a store where they sold groceries, hardware, and "a little bit of everything" for twenty-five years.

Joy and her husband had four children. Mr. Brandt worked as a mechanic at Leroy Casady's gas station, and later worked as mechanic for the Apex uranium mine. As the children got older, Joy worked at the cafes, tended bar, and "did a little bit of everything"

including working in the bank and at the courthouse in the Auditor/Recorder's office.

Joy devotes most of her time working with the Austin Chamber of Commerce the Pony Express Territory and Tri-county groups promoting tourism in Austin and the whole region. She also serves on the Lander County Planning Commission.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Joy Brandt at her home, in Austin, Nevada, May 11, 1993.

Good morning, Joy. I'm so pleased you're letting us interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you first tell us your full name?

Joy Brandt: Joy Kathryn Vigus Brandt.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in East Ely, Nevada, Steptoe Valley Hospital on September 3, 1930.

Where were your parents living when you were born?

They were living here in Austin.

Your mom went to Ely for the birth?

Right.

That was the nearest hospital?

I believe it was at that time.

First I'm going to ask you a little bit about your parents. Can you first tell me about your father?

He was born in Cornwall, England. He lived at Los Withall, England and came to Austin when he was about nine years old, and lived in Smoky Valley, Grass Valley area.

Well, if he was nine years old, he came with your grandparents.

Right.

What brought them here?

Ranching and mining.

How did they hear about it all the way from England? Do you know? Did they ever tell you?

Probably by my grandfather's brothers, because they came over here first.

Oh, I see. And were they living in Nevada?

Yes, in this area.

Did they ever tell you how they learned about it?

No, I don't know.

Did your father ever tell you about the trip here, how they traveled and how they got here?

Yes, they landed in New York City and came over here by wagon.

Came over in a wagon?! Did he describe that trip at all?

No, not too much,

And did he ever tell you a little bit about what life was like when they first arrived and he was growing up?

Not too much. The only thing he talked about mostly was coming to Smoky and riding with his daddy in to deliver milk from the Ranch.

So they lived in Smoky Valley?

For a while, yes.

Can you tell us where Smoky Valley is located in relationship to Austin?

It's south of Austin.

Still in Lander County?

Yes.

Did they later move into Austin?

I believe they did. There was a home up here on the hill that the Viguses had lived in, and I'm sure they lived there too.

What about your mother's family?

They came here from Genoa, my grandmother was born in Genoa, and they came over here to what's known as the Blackbird Ranch.

Where is that or was that located?

That's about ten miles east of Austin.

Did you know your grandparents, either side?

I knew my Grandmother Streshley.

Did she ever talk to you about her life in Italy and how she came to America?

No, Genoa, Nevada she was born in.

Oh! I thought Italy! Oh, because there are a lot of people in Lander County from Italy.

She was born in the Mormon settlement over in Genoa.

I see. How far is Genoa?

Oh, gosh, two hundred miles, I guess.

And what county is that?

That's in Douglas, I believe. It's over south of Carson.

How old was she when they moved to Austin?

I'm not sure, but I'm sure she was a very small child.

And why did they come to Austin?

For ranching out here.

Your grandpop was a rancher?

Yes.

And did they practice their Mormon religion here in Austin?

No, because there wasn't a Mormon church here at that time, so she joined the Episcopal church.

Tell me a little bit about your mother.

Well, she was a red-headed lady. [chuckles] Very personable, had a quick wit. She married my dad in 1929, I believe.

Did he live in Austin at that time?

Yes.

Did they grow up together?

I believe they met out there at Grass Valley, because they used to come in to the parties and dances here.

Did your mother pursue any work outside of housework or the home?

Yes. Well, after years she had the International Cafe, and she also had what's known as Kent's Store.

Really?! Okay, let's move back to the time period when she became an active working woman.

Probably 1948, 1949.

After you children were older?

Uh-huh.

Okay, so we're going to backtrack now to the early marriage. How many children in your family?

Just myself. My brother died at birth.

[expressing concern] Oh. So then did your mother stay home and take care of you and the family?

Right.

And at that time your father was ranching?

At the time I was born he was working for Lander County, and then he went to work for the U.S. Forest Service, and had the C.C. (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp and

pioneered these roads out here, Big Creek and Kingston, and Pete Summit.

Oh, I want to hear more about that a little later. Where did you all live in Austin when you were here all together?

The house isn't here right now, but it was right next to the town hall.

And how long did you live in that house?

'til I was three. And then we moved up on the hill, and the house is [still] standing.

So now I want you to go back to whatever your earliest recollections are, which would be after you left that house—for you to describe your very early years. Can you remember before elementary [school], or what are your first memories?

Well, I can remember a lot of Christmases at the house. And we had candles on the tree, instead of lights. My mother was always busy with a lot of children. She only had one, but she had a whole houseful all the time.

Whose children would these be? Did she take care of children, or did she just love all the neighbors' kids?

Well, she just had a passel of kids around. She brought in the neighbor's kids, and whenever we went someplace, we took a bunch of kids with us.

Did she want a bigger family?

Oh yes, I'm sure.

It just didn't happen.

Uh-huh.

Now when you started elementary school, can you remember those early school days?

Yes, I went to school here in the Austin, what's known as intermediate school now.

And that was the grammar school then?

Right.

That's a pretty sturdy school for a little town.

Yeah.

But maybe the town wasn't so small then. Was the town bigger when you went to elementary school?

It was about the same.

About how many children were in your classroom through elementary?

In my class we only had four or five.

Well that gave you a lot of individual attention!

Right.

Who was your teacher?

I had Dolly Ruth Crowell Ansolabeher and she's living out here on a ranch north of Austin.

We're going to try to interview her. Did you ever have Essie Strickland?

No, I didn't, but my children did.

I interviewed her yesterday. Can you remember back to those elementary days what a school

day was like, from the time you left your house to go to school?

Well, I can remember some days were pretty snowy. We had school for a couple of hours, then we had recess, just about the same as they do now.

What did you do at recess?

Played hopscotch a lot. I remember that.

And do you remember how your subjects were taught or what you studied?

We did a lot of actual work as far as growing things and learning about the different processes and what-not. They brought work in to show us.

Describe what they brought in to show you.

Well, cocoa beans. I remember that.

Oh, how wonderful! Did they bring little seedlings and plants?

Yes, right.

Oh, that's wonderful. Did they bring in any animals?

I don't remember too many animals, but I remember one teacher brought a radio in so we could listen to a radio show every morning, because she was talking about music and how it affected lives and whatnot.

That sounds like a wonderful teacher. Now let's go back into your home when you were young, through your elementary: describe what a typical day in your house would be from the time you woke up.

Well, I wasn't too much different than anybody else, I guess.

Did you have electricity and running water?

When I was real small, we didn't, but we had later—we put electricity in.

How old were you when you had that, do you remember?

Well I can remember we had electricity, and then it wasn't always hooked up, but we had mantle lights and whatnot.

Gas?

Gas lights.

What about indoor plumbing?

At the time I was growing up, we had an outdoor toilet.

That was hard in winter!

Yes! [laughter]

And how did you take your baths?

We had a big old washtub.

And how did you heat the water?

On the stove.

And what fuel was used for the stove?

We had a wood stove at that time.

Is that right? Only a wood stove?

Wood heat.

And you cooked on the wood stove?

Right.

And where did your family buy their supplies?

A lot of it was brought in from the ranches at the time I was little. They did have stores here though. They had Murphy's Store and they had the Myles Store.

And you could get staples?

Yes, right.

And tell me about one day in your home, what your mother did and how the chores were done and if you had any chores. Describe a day, from the time you woke up.

Well I can remember my dad usually cooked breakfast.

Really?

And it consisted of hot cereal every morning, and meat, probably biscuits or pancakes, a big breakfast. He believed in a big breakfast. My mom did a lot of sewing.

Did she? Did she make your clothing?

Most of 'em, when I was little.

She had a sewing machine?

Right.

What was dinnertime like?

A quiet time.

Did your mom cook the dinners?

Oh yes, yes.

Did you have chores when you started to get a little bit bigger?

Yeah, I did dishes and cleaning around the house.

How was the laundry done?

At the time I was a kid, she had two big washtubs that she heated the water on the stove and used a big old tub.

And hung lines out in the yard?

Right.

What did you do on real snowy, cold days?

Well, she had one of those clothes racks that she had in the house.

When you were in grammar school, up until you went into middle school, what were the recreation activities for kids here?

Well, basketball and volleyball mostly.

Where would that be? On the school grounds?

Yes. And then some baseball.

Did you stay in school after, to play on the playground?

Sometimes.

What were other things you did for fun?

Oh, going out on the tours to see the country.

With your parents?

Yes, my mother was raised out here on the old Streshley homestead, so we used to go out there a lot.

Oh, and have picnics and hike around?

Right, with my grandmother.

Now where did your grandma live?

Right next door.

Oh! And did your mom take care of her later?

No. My aunt lived with her for a number of years while she was County Clerk. And then another aunt, Minnie, moved in with her later on when she was older, and they lived there.

Did the one aunt who lived with her, did she remain single?

The one that was Lander County Clerk married and moved to Smoky Valley. Then she went on to Fallon.

Oh, is that right?! But in the younger days she lived with Grandma?

Right.

That was kind of fun. Did you visit her often?

Oh yes.

Did she babysit?

I stayed with her quite a bit.

That's really nice, to get to know your grandma. Did she go with you on these outings?

Right.

And what kind of a car did your family have?

My dad had a big old, I think it was a Buick, at one time. And in later years, we had a pickup. Then a station wagon. He had quite a few different cars.

Now you say he worked on the county roads?

Right.

And was that when you were little?

That was for the Forest Service. Then later on he went to work for the county.

Was he always able to stay at home?

Uh-huh.

He didn't travel?

Once in a while he'd go out for a night or two, but he was usually home.

Tell me a little bit about your dad. I got a little feel for your mom. What kind of a man was he?

Well, very quiet. When he had something to say, he said it. Very personable person.

Did you have a close relationship with both parents?

Yes, I did.

Only daughter. You must have been precious to them.

Yeah.

Now, when you finished grammar school, where did you go for the next classes? Same school?

Yes, I went to high school here too.

Was it all in the same building?

Right.

How was the school training here?

Very good.

Did you have summers off?

Yes.

What did you do in the summers? Play around?

We spent a lot of the summers out with my dad when he was working on the roads—we camped out.

Really?! Oh, describe that.

Well, the main camps that we stayed at were Kingston, and we stayed in tent cabins.

Tent cabins that were there that you rented, or you built?

No, they brought them in. They had that wooden bottom with a tent top.

I see, in other words they brought it in for the workers and they could bring their families.

Right.

Were there other families and kids there?

Not too many. We were about the only ones out there.

Was that fun?

Yes.

No other kids, though.

Oh, Mother always brought...

Other kids with you?! [laughs]

Yeah. And then there at Kingston, the ranch was right below that, the Schmidlein Ranch. So it wasn't too far away.

Was there swimming nearby, any creek or river?

When we were out at Pete Summit there was a pond out there we used to go swimming in.

Oh, what fun! How old were you when you went with your dad and mom to these work camps?

I was five or six.

And for how long did that go on?

Oh, for about maybe four years, I guess, every summer.

Oh! So you looked forward to that?

Oh yes.

Oh, that's wonderful.

I didn't want to come back to school!

[laughs] Did they have junior high, or did they call it middle school? What did they call it?

No, we didn't, we went straight into high school, from the eighth grade.

When did your folks start the grocery store business you mentioned?

In 1950.

That's way after you were grown, so we won't move into the stores yet. So let's continue into your high school days. Was your mother still at home, not active yet?

Oh yes. My dad was working for Lander County at that time.

Doing what?

Road construction.

Did you go any more to work camps?

No, not then.

He worked here. Did he like his work?

Oh yes.

Now you're into high school, you're getting a little bit bigger. What was life here like for high school kids? How many were there in your class?

About four or five all the way through school.

Not very many.

No.

Did you form close friendships?

Yes, I had quite a few good friends.

When did you start getting interested in fellas?

Oh, probably about thirteen. [laughs]

Was there enough to select from? [chuckles]

Oh, yeah, there was quite a few.

Did you have dances?

Of course I think the boys were more like brothers, because it was such a small community.

Were there dances?

Oh yes.

Tell me about them.

Well, the one thing that sticks in my mind, Nita Cortola had the Austin Hotel and Millie Acree and Bert Acree played the piano and drums, and we used to go down and tell Anita that Millie would play if she'd let us have the hall. Then we'd go back to Millie and tell Millie that Nita said we could use the hall if she'd play.

Oh, that's cute!

So we used to have dances almost every weekend.

Oh, good. There was no movie theater here?

Yes, there was, for a short time.

Really?!

Yes, it was in the Austin Hotel. And in later years, they moved it into what's known as the Owl Club.

Now, when you say "the Austin Hotel"...

That's the one that's burnt there on Main Street.

That was sad. As a high school person, and looking down Main Street now, tell me how different it is now than it was then.

It's quite a bit different, because the buildings were all there when I was growing up.

Was the town active, was the mining still active when you were young?

The silver mines, yes.

Were there migrant workers here who came just for the mining?

Yes, there was, right.

What was different? Now, you look down, it's pretty quiet streets. Were they ever kind of busy at night?

Well, yes, in the evening when people came from work.

There are a lot of stores closed up now.

Right.

When did that start to happen?

Well, I'd say during the service years, during World War II it seemed to quiet down, a lot of the stores closed.

A long time ago.

Yes.

And they just remained like that? Does someone own them, or own the property?

Yeah, it's owned by people.

And they just leave it, because it's not economically feasible to restore?

Well, they want to restore some of them. But trying to get the funds to do it...

Oh. What was the population of the town when you were in high school? I think it's now about three hundred fifty, isn't it?

Probably about three or four hundred.

Oh, so it hasn't really changed in the permanent population.

Not permanently.

Just the ones coming in to work and leaving.

Right.

Going back to those days, what did you do summers then, if you weren't going to the camp?

We used to do a lot of camping out, on weekends and what not.

What was your mother's life through your high school years? Did she start to get active in anything besides all these kids she loved?

She was always active in her church, the Episcopal church.

And now coming through your high school years, did you start to develop special areas of interest in your school subjects or what you might want to do?

More a business course.

Did they give you that in high school?

Yes, I took typing and bookkeeping over here.

So they gave good business courses. When did you start to do some for-pay part-time work?

I was about seventeen, I guess, and I drove. My first job was out here with what used to be the Frontier Tavern.

Where was that? When you said "out here," where was that? On Main Street?

No, it's twelve miles out.

In which direction?

Towards Eureka, east of Austin, what they called the Frontier Tavern.

And what did you do there?

I waited on table.

Did it feel good to start to earn some money?

Oh yes! I remember I got twenty-five cents an hour. I thought it was great. [laughter]

And did you get tips?

Yes.

Were you driving then?

Yes, I drove out.

When did you start to drive?

When I was thirteen.

Thirteen?! They allowed you to drive at thirteen?

Uh-huh.

Really?

Yes.

Even in these funny hills?

Yeah. [laughter]

I can't believe it! Were you scared or anxious?

I can remember I drove to the house up here on the hill, and I didn't stop, and I went on down the hill and stopped at the bottom of the hilt, and I wasn't going to drive any more. And my dad said, 'You're going to get back in and you're going to take the pickup home and park it,' and I did!

Oh my gosh! Why did they have you start driving so early?

Well, I was there, just with them all the time, so I drove. Mom didn't drive.

Oh, she didn't drive? How come?

She got scared one time when she was driving and wouldn't drive any more.

So that's why your dad said, "You're gonna learn!" So would you help drive on the trips?

Not too much, no.

Did they give you a license?

Yes.

Did you have to take a test?

Uh-huh.

You passed?

Uh-huh.

Wonderful. Well then when you were working out at the tavern, did you use the family vehicle?

Yes, I did.

And they approved and were proud of you?

Yes.

When you graduated high school, how old were you?

I was seventeen.

Then you started to work after?

But I graduated from Churchill County High School. I went down there my last year.

How did that happen?

Well, I wanted more of a business course and I couldn't get all of it here.

So you were a young woman who knew what you wanted. That's very good. So how did you arrange to go to Churchill County?

Well Mother had a good friend that worked there at the Penney's Store, and I went down and stayed with her and went to school.

Gee, that's very courageous. I admire that. So did you know any of the kids?

I had known some of them because we used to go to the rodeos and shows down there, and I had met quite a few of the kids before.

Oh good. So you spent your last senior year there.

Right.

I want to know a lot of things about it. First, I want to know what was Fallon like when you went there, compared to today. What was Fallon like when you arrived?

Well, the base wasn't as big—they were just starting it at that time.

What year was that?

In 1947.

So that was after the war. What was the main part of town like then?

Well most of the businesses were right on Main Street at that time.

They had a theater then, didn't they?

Yes, they still have, but I think they have two theaters in there now.

Did it seem like a big city after Austin?

Oh yes! [laughs]

Was that exciting?

Yeah.

Describe where you lived with these friends. Where was it and what was it like?

I lived right on the old highway that comes from Austin to Fallon, right as you go into Fallon.

Did you have your own room?

Yes.

You paid room and board?

Right.

And did you eat with them?

Yes.

And how far was that from the high school?

Oh, about four blocks, I guess.

You just walked?

Walked.

Did you like it, like your courses?

Yes, loved it.

What did you do there for your social life?

Well, I was involved with the band and the glee club.

What did you play in the band?

A clarinet.

Did you do that here in Austin?

No, we didn't have a band teacher here.

Well how did you learn? Did you start brand new there with an instrument?

I had played a little bit before, because I had an old clarinet. And then when I went down there, why, I got in a band.

And they taught you enough to play?

Oh yes.

How exciting that must have been! Did you have uniforms?

No, but we had hats and whatnot.

You'd wear all the same color blouse?

Uh-huh.

Tell me, where did the band perform?

Mostly on Main Street and in the auditorium.

Did you go on parades?

Right.

How many were in the band?

I think there was about sixty of us.

Oh what fun! Do you have any pictures of that? I hope!

Gosh, I don't know whether I do or not.

Did anyone take pictures of the band?

Probably in the book down there.

Oh, in their high school. What fun! And you said you were in a glee club?

Right.

So you liked music?

Oh yeah, loved music.

Did you carry on with your music in your life?

I played for a number of years, the piano, after the kids were born. But then I kind of gave it up.

Got busy?

Yeah.

So okay you're in high school there. Did you meet any fellas you liked?

Oh, I went around with a bunch of them, you know, a group of us used to travel together.

Did you have a car when you went down there?

No, I didn't.

Did you come back home on the weekends?

Sometimes I did.

And how would you come home?

A friend of mine used to come get me, or my folks would.

Okay, so sometimes you came home. Tell me about your graduation.

There was a hundred of us at graduation.

Did you wear anything special?

Yeah, I remember a yellow flowered dress I wore.

Your folks all came and were so proud?

Yes.

Was there a prom?

Yes, a baccalaureate, everything.

Did you go?

Yes.

Who did you go with?

My husband-to-be took me to the baccalaureate.

So you already had a fella. You liked each other?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about him. Was he in your class?

No, he had been in World War II and came home from the service when I met him.

Was his home Fallon?

No. He moved from Hayward, California, to Elko, where he went to grammar school. Then he moved to Beowawe and Tenabo, and he went to grammar school in Beowawe. And when he was in the eighth grade they came to Austin.

Oh, he lived in Austin?! So you knew him in Austin?

Well, I knew of him before.

Was he older?

Yes.

How many years older?

About eight years.

That is quite a difference. Well, what brought him to Fallon?

He used to come down just to see me.

Oh, okay, let's back up a little bit. In other words, after the war, he came back to Austin. Did he come back to Austin before you went to high school in Fallon?

Yes, he came back in 1946.

Were you interested in him at that time before you went to Fallon?

Yes.

You were. You started to go together?

Right.

Okay, and then he'd come and visit you. So then he took you to the prom. Now from the prom, bring me forward in your life at that time, from graduation a little bit, what you did.

I got a scholarship to go to beauticians' school in Reno.

Oh, were you interested in that?

So I went down there for a year to Reno, and I stayed at what they called the old Harmony Home.

What is Harmony Home?

Boarding house.

For girls, women?

Well, it was mostly women. Some men were there.

Tell me about the school.

It was the Sierra Beauty College, is the one I went to. It's no longer in Reno.

Did you like that?

Yes, yes I did.

What's your husband's name?

William Brandt.

What did you call him?

Bill.

Did Bill come to Reno to visit you?

Oh yes.

You were going steady by then?

Yeah.

How long did you go to beauty school?

About nine months, a year, two years.

Did you work as a beautician?

It was practical schooling, so you worked in the shop and also classes.

When you finished school you had a certificate?

Right.

Did you pursue being a beautician?

I did for a couple of years, 'til the kids started coming and [I] gave it up.

Okay, before the kids come, you have to get married. [laughter]

Yeah!

So tell me how old you were and when that happened—a little bit about your wedding.

I was nineteen. I got married at St. George's Episcopal Church.

Where your mom was active?

My dad and mom were there, and Bill's dad and stepmother were there, and my best friend was my bridesmaid.

What was your best friend's name?

Loanna Webb. Or Webb now, it was Peacock then.

Okay, does she still live here?

No, she lives in Lunt, Nevada.

Were your parents happy about your getting married?

Yes, they seemed to be.

Where did you establish your home?

We lived over by the Catholic Church for about three months, and then we bought this house.

Oh, you were able to have enough money to buy a house!

Well, we had some good friends. We went to banks and that didn't work, so we had a good friend that helped us out.

Loaned you... Could you tell me what you paid for it?

About eight hundred dollars.

Oh my! And that was what year?

In 1949.

Wasn't that fortunate that you bought it when it was so reasonable?

Yeah.

And was that kind of thrilling to have your own place?

Oh yes, right.

Where did you practice your beautician work here in Austin?

Right here at my house.

Oh, how wonderful! You set up a...

Yeah.

Did you get a lot of customers?

I got a few.

Enough to earn a little money?

Yeah.

How soon after your wedding did you have your first child?

A year later, a daughter, Sharon.

Where did you go to have your baby?

I went to Ely, so she was born in the same hospital I was.

And was there enough time to go?

Yes! We had some wild trips from Austin to Ely.

Oh my. And what did your husband do to earn a living here?

At that time he was working for Leroy Casady at what's known as Ramos Oil now.

Is that a gas station?

Right. He was a mechanic.

Oh, he was a mechanic! That's a good field to be working in. So you were here in the house taking care of baby. Where were your mom and dad? Were they nearby?

They had the store by then.

Oh. Did they lease the store?

No, they were buying it.

Tell me, when did they start doing that?

I believe it was about the fall of 1950 they bought that.

Just about the time you were having your little baby.

JB. Yeah.

And had they thought about that for a long time?

Well, Mom had the International Cafe for a while.

Let's back up to International Cafe.

Yeah, she had that for about a year. And then when Dad retired from the county, he wanted something to do, so that's why they went into the store.

Let's back up to what year your mom had the International Cafe.

1949

Did she buy it?

No, she leased it.

Oh, she leased it. Now, tell me what she did there.

She had the cafe, she cooked, waited table, did a little bit of everything.

And just for one year?

Uh-huh.

And was that the year your dad then decided to keep busy and get a little store together?

The next year, yes.

Did she then lease International Cafe to someone else?

The people who owned it did.

I see, the people who owned it leased it. What was the International Cafe like when your mom had it?

Well, it was a little different than it is now. At the time that she had it, why the main counter was back almost to the kitchen, and all the rest were tables for the front. And then later years, of course, they put a horse shoe, and that's no longer there either, horse shoe counter.

You're talking about the bar?

No, in the cafe.

In the cafe? Because I've been in there.

The partition is in there now, so it's a little different.

Were there a lot of customers?

Well, mostly people that worked here would have breakfast there, and then they'd have dinner when they come from work.

Were the mines still active when she had that?

There were some going then.

What were some of the things that she cooked?

Oh, I can remember she used to have a big pot of soup and stew all the time. She always had that.

Did she make her own bread?

Yes, she did.

And pies and desserts?

Yeah.

Did she enjoy that?

Oh yes! She liked to be around people.

Now, your dad you said retired. So now let's move into the store. Tell me about that.

Well they bought that from Don and Jean Lake, who had moved to Battle Mountain and wanted to get rid of the building, and they bought it.

And what kind of store did they establish?

It was a grocery store, but they had hardware, they had paint, they had a little bit of everything in there.

Where was that located?

It's known as Kent's Store now.

And where did they get their supplies and their staples? Where did that all come from?

At that time we had what was known as, I believe it was the Sierra Stages used to bring in a lot. And then IML came through here too.

What's IML?

It was a produce company that shipped groceries across the state.

How often would these supplies arrive?

Once or twice a week, and then they got stuff out of Salt Lake City, hardware.

Would that be delivered, or would they go and get it with their truck?

Some of that was brought in by truck. The truck came through here.

Now did the two of them work atone there in the store?

Just the two of them.

Did you help them at all?

Once in a while, yes.

Would your mom and dad and your little family get together?

Oh yes, all the time.

Tell me what occasions.

Oh, we used to have mostly Sunday dinners together.

At your mom's?

Or here at the house.

Did you get to be a good cook too?

Well, so—so I guess.

Would you go on picnics and camping?

Right.

So then you had a second child pretty soon after?

A boy, Richard.

How long after your little girl?

There's two years difference.

And you went back to Ely for him too?

Right.

That was keeping you pretty busy! And then I see you have a third son, just a year later.

Uh-huh.

So you were busy with diapers and everything.

I'll say!

Describe that kind of a life here in Austin, because you're on hills, you can't wheel a carriage around easily, you can't fence a little yard for playing. Tell me what life was like.

Well, we did fence a yard here.

Oh, you did, for your children. What was it like for you and with the three children so close to each other?

Well, it was busy, but it was nice.

By then did you have a washing machine?

Yes.

Did Mama ever have time to babysit so you and your husband could have a little time alone?

Oh yes, she used to have Sundays off, so she used to take the kids and away they'd go.

Oh, and she loved them. Oh, that's good, so you had time to catch up or do a few things. Tell me about your husband during that period.

Well he had stopped working at the Chevron Station and went to work for what was known as the Apex Mine.

What was the Apex Mine?

It was a uranium mine out here. That brought quite a few people into town.

Now where, in relationship to Austin, was that mine?

That's about six miles south of Austin, on the Big Creek side.

Now what kind of work did he do at the mine?

He was their mechanic.

Oh good. Did he like that? The pay was better?

Yes.

How long did he work there, or did that last?

Gosh, I feel it was three or four years they had it open out there.

So you were doing pretty good.

They called it the "golden years."

Because you were all doing good.

Yeah.

Now when people came in to work at the mine, where did they live?

There was houses here that they lived in, and of course some had trailers.

Where would they park the trailers? Up on the hill?

Right.

I see a lot of signs of mining behind these hills. When did that go on?

That was the old silver mining.

So that's a long time ago. When did that silver mining end?

Well, when I was just a small child they had a couple going up here on the hill, but they didn't have any big mining going on.

Just all these little ones, and they just left those little piles?

Yes. But what they did when they came here, what my folks told me, wherever they dug, they built a house or a cabin or something and just worked right there.

Is that why there's all these little places up on the hill?

Right.

And tell me how you handled it in the winter, with the snow and you had to go someplace in the car with these kids. Was it dangerous?

No, just put the chains on and away you go.

So then your kids are growing up a little bit. When did you start to be able to become active in some of the things that you liked so much?

I went to work when my youngest son, Gerald, went to a special school in Reno.

And why did he have to go to a special school in Reno? That was Gerald Timothy?

Yeah. He was born about three years after Billy, and he had a speech impediment and he had problems, so my Aunt Lena took him to Reno and put him in a special school down there.

Was it a birth...

Birth defect.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. So he went into a place where he could be cared for.

Right.

So then your others were in school?

Right.

Right over here?

Uh-huh, and I went to work. I worked at the cafes and I tended bar—did a little bit of everything.

During the day when they were in school?

And I was also active with my lodge.

When you worked in the bar or restaurant what kind of work did you do?

Well, in the hotel I rented rooms, tended bar, and did general...It was a hotel.

Was that the International?

No, that was the Austin Hotel.

Oh, before it burned. Describe it, since it isn't there now. What was that hotel like?

Well, they had the bar on one side and the restaurant next to it. And then upstairs was the dance hall, a big ballroom.

How many hours did you work there?

Eight hours.

And did Mama take care of the kids when you were still working?

Well, by that time my kids were in school and Mom was always around, so...

They were big enough to stay and play at school. How old were they? What years was this?

Well my third child was in the first grade.

But a first-grader needs care, so did he go to Grandma's house?

Yeah, or come down where Mama was.

Oh! Uh-huh! Did you kind of like getting back out into the work force and seeing people?

Yeah.

And how long did you do that?

Well I did that for a number of years, and then in 1969 I went to work at the courthouse in the Auditor/Recorder's Office.

And what did you do there?

I worked on recordings and accountings and a little bit of everything.

So your business training here really helped you, didn't it?

Right.

And that's when the county seat was still here.

Yes, right.

Now were your mom and dad busy running the store?

Yes, they had that for twenty-five years.

Really?! Twenty-five years! So you were all busy. And your husband was still working at the mine? Or what did he do after the mine?

He left the Apex Mine and then he came back in and worked at the station for a few years, and then he went to work for Lander County, for the Road Department.

So everybody was busy, and your children were doing fine in school?

Right. There was a few years my husband was gone working for Morrison Knudtsen on construction work.

So you were working at the courthouse. That must have been a nice kind of job.

Yes.

How long did you do that?

I worked there 'til 1972.

And then why did you leave that?

Well, just problems. And I went to work for the Austin again for a while.

Oh, for the hotel?

Uh-huh. And I went to work for the bank.

Which bank?

Nevada National Bank.

And what did you do there?

Clerk work.

Were you a teller?

Teller.

Was that full-time?

Yes, it was.

Oh, you were having a busy life! How did you cope with a full-time job and all these kids?

Well at that time my kids were slowly getting out of school.

I see.

Yeah, they were gone.

Now, when they were growing up and into their teens, did they help with chores around the house?

Oh yes.

Became independent?

Right.

Did your kids go to high school here?

Right, they all graduated from here.

And starting with your oldest, tell me what they did after they graduated.

Well, Sharon went to business college in Reno and worked for Triple A (American Automobile Association) for a number of years before getting married.

Triple A, where?

In Reno.

She stayed in Reno and worked there? Did she come home very much?

JB. Yes, she usually came home on weekends.

And what did she do after that?

She got married and had two children.

And where does she live?

She lives here in Austin right now.

When they first married, where did they live?

They lived out at Smoky Valley, then they moved to the Geyser Ranch over by Pioche. And then they moved down to Smoky again, and to Fallon. Then they went to Colorado.

Oh my, they moved a lot!

Colorado, Albuquerque, Texas. He was on construction work.

Oh my gosh! How many children?

Two, a boy and a girl.

And what brought her back to Austin?

This time she came back because of her dad's death, and decided to stay. She was living in Albuquerque at the time.

Oh, when did your husband die?

In 1991.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. You say she came back. Where was her husband?

They had divorced.

I see. So then now is she here to stay?

I believe so.

Where are her kids?

She has a boy in Utah, and her daughter is with her.

How old is your granddaughter?

She was fifteen yesterday.

So she's young. And where do they live?

They live up here in Ramos' Trailer Park.

I see. That must be nice to have them near you. Now what about your second child? When he graduated high school, what did he do then?

He went to work for a friend of his up by Elko, when they first started Spring Creek. They were putting in the electrical and water pipes and what not.

Oh, he knew how to do that? took after his daddy?

He went up and worked for a friend of his up there. He took one year of college too.

Where was that?

At the University in Reno.

But it seemed he was mechanical and knew how to do this other work?

Well, a little bit, yeah.

And then what did he do?

Where my husband was a mechanic, why, my boy was more the construction, outdoor construction type.

And then where does he live now?

He lives in Elko and works in Winnemucca. And he has two daughters. Billy lives here and works in Elko on construction.

Did he stay here the whole time after he graduated?

No, he's been gone. Well, in fact, both boys were in Colorado, worked in Colorado—went over there on a construction job. And then Rich went up to Alaska. Billy broke up with his wife and came back to Austin then he went to Alaska. So they were up there.

To do what in Alaska?

They were working on the pipeline up there.

Oh, how wonderful! And I'm always interested when I interview here, how many children come back, which in this day and age is very unusual.

Billy lives here, but he works in Elko.

But they're all near, in the same state.

Uh-huh.

Now I want to go back to your mom and dad. How long did they keep the store?

Let's see, they gave that up in 1973 or 1974.

Why?

In 1982 or 1983, or 1984.

They were getting tired. They sold it.

Was that because not enough business here?

And then what did your mom and dad do after they sold it? Just kind of retire?

Well, they figured there wasn't, but afterwards they were sorry they closed it.

Well, they had a few houses. They started work on that, and my mom was ill, so they didn't finish. They both died in 1976.

Is there a bank here now?

No, there's no type of bank.

Both the same year?!

What do you do?

Same month!

The credit union come in for a few years after that, but they closed too.

How come? They couldn't live without each other?

So it probably isn't economical for them to have a building?

I guess. Mom died, and then Dad died two weeks later.

Evidently.

Oh, he couldn't tolerate that. Did she have a long illness? or pain? or was she okay?

So where do you go to do banking?

Well, for about a year she had trouble.

Mostly Fallon.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Okay, now let's go back to your life. You left the courthouse and you were working again. Now you were at the bank. And how long did you work at the bank?

Oh, my goodness! Now let's go way back. I know you went to Ely to have all your children. What did you do about medical problems here, raising a family? Was there a doctor?

Eleven years.

Well, when they were real little there was a doctor here. But in later years, we had to take them out.

Eleven years! And then did you retire from that?

What did you do if there was an emergency?, as all families have. What did you do?

Yes.

Mostly the ambulance or somebody run 'em out. Or just put 'em to bed and call the doctor.

You retired early, obviously.

Well, they closed the bank.

But I mean, what if there's a bad accident?

Oh, when was that? What year was that?

Well, we had the ambulance.

Oh, you had the ambulance and they would rush you to the hospital.

Right.

Isn't it difficult living without health services near?

Yes, it is hard.

Kind of dangerous, really. What did your mom and dad do when they were sick?

Well, mostly, a lot of the old home remedies when I was growing up.

But I mean at the end, before their death.

Well, Mom went down to Fallon most of the time with her sister

Oh, she stayed there with her sister?

Uh-huh.

During that period did many people leave here because of health as they got older?

Yes, a lot of them did.

Out of necessity.

Right.

Now what did your folks do, sell the store to Kent?

No, they sold it to some people by the name of Holbrook.

And how long did they have the store?

They had it about three years and then they transferred it to some other people, and

they'd only had it for about a year and it went bankrupt and Kent bought it.

[expressing concern] Oh. And they came in from Fallon?

Right.

Are they related, or the same business that has the Kent's Store in Fallon?

Right. He just closed that one down there.

Now why would he close that and open this, when there's more growth in Fallon?

Well, he had both of 'em, but evidently he had too much competition down there.

Oh, with Rayley's.

Left this one open.

Someone in Fallon said that they used the old one in Fallon for a warehouse. Do they do that?

I guess.

So how else did the town change in that decade? Were businesses closing? I mean, the bank closed.

Well when I was growing up, we had a bank, we had a doctor, we had grocery stores, hardware stores, clothing stores—a little bit of everything. And now we don't.

You don't? So when workers don't come in, they can't live off the economy of the residents.

Right.

Epecially as people are getting older, they buy less maybe.

Yeah, not so much. Just the people aren't here.

Yeah. People traveling through on [Highway] 50, do many stop here?

We have a number of people that do.

Stop overnight?

In the summer months, come through this way.

Someone in Fallon told me Kingston was such a resort area that they thought Austin might build up a little for the people living in Kingston. Where do the people in Kingston go? Do they come here?

Well, some of them come in here, but a lot of them go to Fallon, Reno, Ely, Elko.

Yeah, Winnemucca, that way. Before you retired from the bank, did you get active in any other outside activities?

Yes, I was always active in the Rebecca Lodge and church somewhat, but I got active in 4H with my children and the church activities with my children. And then I went in later in the Chamber of Commerce.

Tell me about that. When was that? After you left the bank?

No, during the time I was at the bank, I got involved with the Chamber.

How?

Working with the Chamber on different activities, promoting Austin.

Would this be at night? Or a weekend?

We used to have meetings at lunchtime.

Did you get on the board?

Yes.

Where did they meet?

At that time, when I first started, we had met at the Youth Center or the courthouse. Then later years we met at the different cafes and had dinner.

Had more cafes than now, huh?

Yeah.

You mentioned the Youth Center. I haven't been here very long, but it just seems like an empty building. When did it start and is it functioning now?

Oh, gosh, what year was it? The early fifties, a group of us got together. They had the old firehouse there. Then when the firemen built their *new* building, they put the library in the back of that building. And there's funds through the state to put a library here.

Did you have a library before that?

No, just in the school. So they put that in, because rural counties could get funds to put a library in. So they used the back of that, where the kitchen is now. And they had the library back there, and they put the ambulance in the front at that time. Then after we got this group together, we transformed the front into the Youth Center so the librarian could watch the front and be the librarian also. So it was quite a deal. We remodeled it, fixed it up, but restrooms in.

I see the library is across the street from the Youth Center. Tell me when all those changes occurred.

I believe it was in the early seventies they got other funds, and they had a lease deal with the county and got the old bank building for a library.

So that was where you worked in the bank?

No, I worked up where the trading post is now.

I see, so there were two banks once?

No, the other one had closed and moved into a trailer up where the trading post is. And then later years they put the modular, which is there now. They moved up there in 1962, I believe.

And so the library then was able to move across the street?

Yes, the county moved it into the old Lander County bank building.

How long has the Youth Center been there without the library? How many years?

Gosh, about twenty years, I guess.

Do they still use the Youth Center?

Yes, they do.

And is it also a center where kids can just go?

Yes.

What's there for them to do?

Well they have pool tables and they have games.

About how many young people go there? Is it used very much?

They're supposed to have it open about three nights a week.

It's evenings that it's open?

Right.

More for teenagers?

Three to seven or three to nine, I'm not sure. And then they have youth meetings in there too.

Oh, good. I also went up to that lovely little park recreation area where the pool is. Very, very nice, a lot to do there. When and how did that come about?

Well, for years they wanted a swimming pool here, when Bert Gandolfo was commissioner. When he was commissioner he got funds through a Block Grant.

What's a Block Grant?

Well, it's a government grant for recreation or different entities to use to better their community.

What year was that?

I'm not sure, I'd have to check. [Dedication of park and swimming pool, August 29, 1982.]

It's very, very nice. I'll bet that was a lot of excitement in town. Were there any local funds that went into some of it?

Yes, I think they had a matching grant through Lander County.

Who planned that?

Well, it was mostly his idea to put it up there. He worked on it for a number of years before it went into effect.

Was everything that's there now in the original plan?

No, when they first started it was just the upper part where the lawn is. The little gazebo is new. The Lions Club put that in.

When did the baseball field and the playground...

That was put in later too. And the tennis court. They've added to it, oh, almost yearly, a little bit.

Is it active on weekends and nice weather?

Well, they're trying to get the baseball going again, but the tennis court, a lot of people use it.

How wonderful! And the pool?

Yes, oh yes, when it's open, they love the pool.

Good. So you became active in the Chamber of Commerce. Now tell me about your life. Here you were, no longer working full-time. Tell me some of the other activities that you got involved with.

Well, when Bert Lewis left, she was active in the Austin Chamber and Pony Express Territory, which is a group that promotes Highway 50.

And when she left, why, they asked me to be on that board. So I got involved with them. Of course I was still involved with the Chamber.

When you say "got involved," tell me specifically the kinds of things that you did for this Pony Express promotion.

Well, it's promoting tourism through the middle of the State of Nevada. We meet about, oh, three, four times a year, to promote tourism through the state. We get grants, brochures, posters, tours—do a little bit of everything to promote Nevada.

Now tell me specifically what you do, what you've done and do.

Well, I've been on the Board of Directors for a number of years, and I was Vice President last year, I'm Secretary this year.

But tell me specifically, when you say "brochures and promotion" tell me physically the kinds of things that you do to put into effect the things that the committee says, "let's do this and that."

Well, we've worked on bicycle races. We've worked with the Rural Roundup. We're at this time promoting Highway 93.

Where does that go to?

It goes from the Canadian border down to Mexico, but in Nevada it's from the Idaho border to Arizona.

And comes through Austin?

No, that doesn't, but on the end of the Pony Express Territory, it comes through there, so that's how we get involved.

Okay, you're not only promoting Austin.

Oh, yes, it's the whole region.

And when you say "bicycle races," how does that promote? Bring people from other places?

Right, it brings 'em from all over.

And where is that held?

One of them is from Carson to Ely. The one we're working on this year is what they call the ACERBIS Adventure Rally.

A what?

It's ACERBIS adventure rally.

Where does it get that name?

It's an international rally that they are coming out of Vegas, up through Ely to Wells, back to Ely, over to Eureka to Austin, and back to Tonopah, down to Las Vegas.

How many get involved with something like that?

There's about two hundred riders on that one. And that's motorbikes.

Do they stop here?

Yes, they'll be stopping here to fuel.

Ah, good! And maybe eat?

Yeah, hope so.

So that's wonderful, how you're contributing to not only your home town, but the whole region.

Now tell me a little bit about your husband. Did he retire?

Yes, he retired in 1983 from the Lander County Road Department.

And how did he spend his time?

Well, mostly just retired. Didn't do too much after he retired. He was active with the Lions Club.

Did he fix the house or things that needed doing?

Oh yes, yes.

Were your kids all gone for a period of time?

Yes, there was, oh, a number of years they were all gone.

Did you and your husband have some time for some recreation and a little bit of fun?

We used to do quite a bit of traveling, especially to see the kids. We went to Colorado, went to Texas, went to Alaska.

You did?! Wonderful! And what else in your life can you tell us about that either you've been active in, or have observed in this region?

Well, I'm also active with economic development in this area with Tri-county. And that's Pershing, Humboldt and Lander Counties.

And what do you actually do to help promote it?

I'm on the Board of Directors for the southern end of Lander County.

And is there work assigned to you?

No, we meet two times a year to update our plan, and it's mostly for development, like what they want to put on the list for that year.

Like what?

Well, it's updating their water or recreation or industrial parks, or a little bit of everything.

But how do they put the plan into action?

Tri-county goes to Lander County and it goes through the county.

Where they ask for funds for projects?

Right.

Now I want to ask you something that I know is really controversial between Austin and Battle Mountain, because I know in 1980 the vote moved the county seat to Battle Mountain from Austin. I know there was a lot of difficulty here. Do you want to tell me from your own personal experience and being here, tell me about that period of change.

Well it was hard on Austin, because it took quite a number of offices out of the courthouse, and a number of people were very bitter about it for a number of years. But I think that—I'm not sure—but I think that a lot of the people are getting over that antagonism and bitterness, and they're getting on with their lives.

How did it change Austin?

Well, like I say, it took a number of jobs out of Austin, and we didn't have the county

businesses here any more. So therefore we had to go to Battle Mountain for. .

But then they had to come here, and there were a lot more people there.

Yeah. That was one of their biggest arguments, was the population.

Their population now is what?

Oh, gosh, what is it? I think there's only six thousand in the county, I think. Forty-five, five thousand—something like that.

Here, there's three hundred and fifty.

But there's quite an area out, too.

Sure, the ranches. Did the people who had jobs, were they offered those jobs if they moved to Battle Mountain?

Well some of them just quit, flat. But Estelle Shanks, she used to go down until her time was up.

But let's say those who wanted to keep their job, were they given the option to keep the job and go to Battle Mountain?

Well some of them are.

Did it affect the people that would come to the county for different business? Would they have stayed overnight, or just have come for a meeting?

Well, some of them did stay overnight.

So it changed that. And during that time was there a lot of action here to try to stop it? Was there a lot of petitions?

Oh yes, yes.

Tell me about that period.

I wasn't too active with that, but there was petitions to keep it here. And of course there was petitions down there to bring it up there.

Then there was a vote?

And then it went to a vote of the people.

So even the ranchers, everyone had a vote. What was the vote, do you know?

Gosh, I don't remember what the difference was. It wasn't as big as they had liked, though.

Is there anything about Lander County—not just Austin, just all of Lander County—that I might not have asked you that you want to share before we end the interview?

Well for the last few years I've been on the Lander County Planning Commission, and that gets me involved with Battle Mountain people too.

Do you go there for meetings?

Yes. We had a town meeting up here *last* week, and then we'll be going down there on the nineteenth.

Do they share?, so one time it's here, and one time it's there?

Well, no, we haven't, but they were talking about it the other night, so we might start.

Tell me on that board, the division of where the people are from.

There's one lady from Kingston, I'm from Austin, and the other members are from the Battle Mountain area.

How many other members on it?

There's seven on the Board.

What are some of the things that are being planned?

Well, mostly businesses, and of course the chemical companies that come into Battle Mountain.

With the new minings and the new gold mining.

Right, and the new businesses. We have a lot of home occupation businesses going in now.

What does that mean?

You can have a business in your home.

Oh, that's interesting! Very good! What are some of the businesses?

Well we have a gunsmith here in Austin, that's one of them. Of course Sally [Cook] works with computers. I think she works under a company too. She's Madge's [Bertrand] and Estelle's [Shanks] cousin. But anyway, she has hers in her home.

I see, that's a very good idea.

And they have quite a number of them down in Battle Mountain.

So you work on the ones for Austin?

No, both.

Now do you have to vote on it?

Well, we motion.

A motion for it. Well, that's very good. It's like when you had your beauty parlor. So now they have to get licenses for that, is that right?

Right, they have to go through Lander County.

And then they have to advise the neighbors, so if the neighbors aren't happy with that.

They have to let the neighbors know, and they have a chance to say whether they like it or not.

Do you see a lot of new businesses in the county?

There's a few.

Are there more coming into Austin, do you think?

I don't know—not right at the moment.

Well, is there anything else about your life in Lander County that I might have forgotten?

Gosh, I don't know.

Well, I did forget to ask you: was your husband ill before he died?

He had heart problems and had heart surgery.

[expressing concern] Oh. Now where did he have to go for heart surgery?

To Washoe Medical Center in Reno.

Oh, to Reno. Did he recuperate well from that?

The first time he had it done was 1982 or 1983, and he came out of that fine. But in 1991 he didn't.

[expressing concern] Oh. And how is your life now?

Well, I try to keep active, keep busy.

Do you go down to the Senior Center regularly?

Once in a while I get down there.

That's a very nice place for socializing, keeping in touch with people.

Get down for lunch.

Well, I want to thank you so much on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, for sharing your life with us. This is the end of the interview.

Thank you.

JOY BRANDT
PHOTOGRAPHS



JOY BRANDT
MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

JOY BRANDT
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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OLE LEROY CASADY

PREFACE

Leroy Casady was a frail ninety-three-year-old man when he was interviewed. Although we were not sure if he could contribute information for the Lander County Oral History Project, his long life and experiences encouraged us to attempt an interview. Although his mind often drifted, he could remember some experiences clearly and his face would light up. A pet bird in a cage near his chair chattered throughout the interview, imitating him. An adorable great-granddaughter and attractive young mother of the baby, who lived in the house, occasionally came into the room. It was obvious the baby brought much joy to Mr. Casady's life.

Someone came to take Mr. Casady to the Senior Center lunch, which was the highlight of his day. He stopped abruptly and left before we could schedule another session. He died [October 20, 1993].

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Leroy Casady at his home on Main Street, Austin, Nevada, July 21, 1993

Good morning, Mr. Casady. I'm so pleased to be here to be able to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Can you tell us your full name?

Leroy Casady: Ole Leroy Casady.

And where were you born?

Salt Lake City, Utah.

And what was that date?

March 25, 1900.

I want to find out what brought you, either with your family or alone, to Nevada. Can you tell me?

Yes, I came to Nevada to complete a road job from Norfolk to Elko. I was loaned to the bonding company. The original contractor went broke, and the bonding companies in those days were *only* responsible for the finishing of the job—no bills or nothin’.

How old were you when you came?

Nineteen.

Now I’m going to back up a little bit, because I want to find out a little bit about your childhood, to see what brought you into that work that you finally did in Nevada. So what I want to do is find out just a little bit about your growing up years that led to your interest in the work that you did when you were nineteen.

Well, I went to work for h company that was called Strange and McGuire. They were the biggest paving and hot stuff contractors in the West. And I went to work for them at American Fork [Utah]. I knew a little about engines, and there were very few people knew anything about that.

Well, let’s back up even a little more. When you were in high school, when you were a teenager, did you start to know the kind of work you wanted to do? And how did you become an expert in that area?

Well, when I was in school at that time my father had left my mother and I had to take any kind of a job I could get. So one of the first jobs was on the flume. That’s a water flume, carrying water to Provo, Utah. I got a job there, and then I got promoted to handling the superintendent’s team. He had what they called the “candy team.”

What does that mean?

Well, the candy team was the team that went out and hauled in the groceries from Provo and stuff like that. And the candy team didn’t hardly do much. They finally got boiled and that’s how I got to.... I told him that they was gettin too much to eat and not enough work. So he turned that job over to me, running these horses.

How old were you when he turned that over to you?

Well, I was around, I guess fifteen—right around fifteen there.

That’s amazing. You were a very bright and responsible young man. Now when you first came to Nevada, what part of Nevada in that job that you were telling us about, where was that?

From Norfolk to Elko, and that was for a bonding company. I came in from the bonding company, which was Portland Cement.

Where did you live when you came to work?

In Nevada?

Yes.

Well, I stayed at Elko ’til we finished that job.

Was that at a boarding house?

Yes, you might say so. You could get board and room for anywhere between twenty-five and thirty-five dollars a month.

What was your paycheck when you did that work?

Well, it was about a dollar-and-a-half a day.

Did that go pretty far in those days?

Yeah, that was pretty good. I finally got up to two dollars—that was *exceptionally* good.

When you came, did you come alone?

Alone, yes.

That was pretty brave for a young man. How long did you stay in Elko on that job?

Oh, about six or eight months.

And then what?

Then I went to Winnemucca and this contractor that I first went to work for, he had a job there from Winnemucca to Rose Creek, but they was under the name of Valandingham and McGuire.

Now how long did you work and did you stay in Winnemucca?

I stayed there two years. I built three different ways into Winnemucca. I was superintendent on jobs building the first roads into Winnemucca, on three different directions.

Oh my, what a responsible job! What year was that?

In 1920.

Were those the first paved roads?

Well, they weren't paved then, they were just graveled roads. Paving didn't—oiling didn't come along until about 1936-1938.

When you lived in Winnemucca did you start to make friends? Did you start to socialize a little bit?

Well, of course I never had time to do too much, but yes, I went to take the banker's daughter out to a movie now and then—that was about the extent of any amusement in those days.

Now, after Winnemucca, where did you go then?

From Winnemucca, I came to Camel Creek out here. The company had a job there at Camel Creek from Camel Creek to the top of the hill there.

Where is Camel Creek in relationship to Austin?

Right out here forty miles on Highway 50—Lincoln Highway at that time.

And where did you live?

I lived out at the camp then.

Did you come into Austin?

Oh, yeah, I had to come in once in a while. Austin didn't have a telephone connection out of town, but they had Western Union—they had an office here in town.

What I want you to describe to me now is your first visit, first time you saw Austin, and I want you to describe that and how you felt about it.

Well the first time I saw Austin, we left Salt Lake in a car. We left on a Monday morning before daylight and got to Austin about, oh,

four o'clock Wednesday afternoon. It took us that long on the road.

Now, when you say "we," who was that? Who were you with?

Well, I brought another mechanic with me, to go to work at Camel Creek there.

Describe what Austin was like when you first saw it.

Well, it was just a little town. It was kind of...It did a lot of business. See, they was the hub for Tonopah, Manhattan, Gold Fields...

So the mines were active then?

Well, there was a little bit, not much—very little activity. Most of the activity was down at Manhattan and Round Mountain.

Now, what year was that when you first saw Austin?

In 1920.

In relationship to today, what was the town like? The main street and the kind of houses that were here, what kind of a road. Describe it.

Well, it was just a little town, a quiet town. I think there was about three hundred and fifty people here at the time in this area. Of course the town at one time was over 10,000. They had two good stores, really good stores.

And what were they?

One was a store and a meat market, and they cured their own meats by air, you know—air cured all the meat. These people that came from Manhattan, Sister Seraphine

of the hospital in Reno, she came with 'em that time. She was related to Murphys.

Now was Murphys the name of the meat market?

Yeah.

Okay.

That was a terrific store. They had the big teams of horses, would be lined up there in the morning, loading up to take supplies to Round Mountain, Manhattan, and even down to Gold Field. And then the other store was the Austin Commercial, they called it. That was another big store that loaded the wagons out.

What kind of supplies did they sell?

Oh, everything—groceries to anything—all kinds of groceries and meat and all that kind of stuff, you know. Hardware and all, anything that was in a general store, they had.

Do you know where they got their supplies?

From Reno. They came to Battle Mountain on the train, and then from Battle Mountain to Austin on the train.

That's right, in those days the train came here from Battle Mountain.

Yeah, the Nevada Central they called it, came here, through there. That was built by Stokes, the famous Stokes family.

Of the Stokes Castle.

Yeah.

Now I want to back up a little bit. You came to work at the camp and you lived at the camp. How often did you come into Austin?

Oh, maybe once a week or so.

And were you working on roads?

Yes, I was superintendent for the contractor.

Did that include the roads in Austin?

Well, it was just a one-road job. See, that was the first job that was built between... Well, the second job between here and Fallon.

Oh! And you were in charge of that.

Yes.

Can you describe when you were working on those roads, what it was like, what the conditions were, and how you coped with the weather?

Well, of course we all lived in tents. We all had tents, and an adequate cook house, of course. That was the main [laughter] tent. The working conditions were, well, fairly good, you might say. The most of the help we had was winos and coke heads [cocaine addicts] and all that stuff. They were boomers, going all the time. Maybe they'd work two or three hours, enough to buy another shot.

A shot of what? Whiskey?

Well yeah, whiskey or coke—dope, they used. And some of 'em would work a couple of hours, and some of 'em work a day, and some of 'em, if they worked a week or ten days, that was an extremely good man.

How did you then go about getting more workers?

Well, I had the bartenders in Reno, had them so that when we'd get close to a telephone, which is apt to be Fallon or Battle Mountain or someplace, I'd talk to them and found out who was hanging around the bar, you know, and if they was broke. If they wasn't broke, we wasn't interested. But if they were broke, we might. They'd come out to Battle Mountain on the train, and then come up here on the train. Some of 'em walked in.

Were they of different ethnic groups, like Indians, Mexicans?

No, no. I had one or two Indians working for me, but they weren't Mexicans. Well, there wasn't any nationality you could name. It all depended what kind of work they were doing, how good at it they were, we'd get 'em out there. We charged 'em ninety cents a day for board and room. That meant you could eat all the steaks you wanted to. Steaks for breakfast, you could have 'em. Any kind of food you wanted, the *best*. Now, I had three camps there on Carroll Summit. One was down at what's known as the Brown Ranch out there now, where Harry Brown lives. The other one was up about a half-mile in Camel Creek. And then there was another one up there about a mile-and-a-half above that. That's where all the rock work was going on.

When you say "rock work," what do you mean?

Well, building that road up there was mostly blasting and cliffs, you know, going around. Most of it was very heavy work.

Did you have supervisors or men that you could trust to head the other camps?

Well, yes. I had a foreman, of course, in every camp. "Straw boss," they called 'em. Had a straw boss in each camp, running things. And then on horseback, I'd go from one camp to the other. The main thing was, I'd have to go every morning, make sure we had a cook. Them cooks was very vital. That's how I learned to cook!

You mean sometimes you had to do the cooking?

Oh yes! Them cooks and waitresses is the most temperamental people in the world. I've had cooks get up in the morning and ring the first bell—that was to get everybody up—and then fifteen, twenty minutes later tell 'em breakfast would be ready at six-thirty, and they wouldn't even have the coffee pot on. They were that terrible. So I had to get up early every morning and make sure that we had cooks. If we didn't have a cook, I'd have to cook myself, or one of the foremen—those that I could rely on! [laughter] One of us would have to cook, that's all.

Now tell me what a typical breakfast was.

Oh, everything, everything: hotcakes, ham, bacon, sausage, coffee. Anything we had there, the cook would cook. Had terrific meals, I'll tell ya'. And some guys didn't like bacon and some didn't like ham, and some didn't like sausage. Some didn't like their eggs unless they were straight up, and all that kind of stuff. Those people, some of 'em hadn't had anything to eat for six weeks [laughter], were starving to death when they come there.

So it sounds like a lot of 'em would work, because then they could at least have good food.

Oh yeah, that was your big drawing card, your food. The best food was the only thing them guys had in mind. You'd want 'em to go to work, and the first thing they'd find out from somebody, "How's the cook? How's the cookin'?" "Oh, the food is the best!" Well, then they'd all want to go to work there.

About how many men were there under your supervision in that period?

About three hundred and twenty, I think the state estimated, on the three different camps—about a hundred in a camp. And I had a German that was in World War I. He was a baker in the German army, and his brother had come over here before that, and was working as a rock mason, brick layer, for me. And he talked Freddie into coming over. Freddie didn't have all of his papers filled out, and the Germans took him back. And then when the war was over, then he came back out to Nevada and he went to work there at Winnemucca for me as a cook, first. And then he went to work there. He was a terrific cook, terrific. He could break even with the cook shack. He could cook for so many people, without help, that he broke even. I had a Mrs. Castle on the other camp. She was a terrific cook. She was a big woman, weighing maybe two seventy-five. She was a terrific cook, but it took a lot of help. She couldn't run the camp as cheap as Freddie could. Then the other was the camp that I had all the trouble with. We was looking for cooks all the time. In fact, as I'd hire you one day for a cook, then I'd be thinking about how to get rid of you at the same time. [laughter] I hated them cooks, the average cooks and waitresses, with a passion.

The waitresses were what?

They were the same too, you know. In other words, they were all men. They'd quit you. Maybe work a half-a-day for you. [laughter] Maybe a week. If they worked a month, they was a terrific guy.

Did you have women, besides that one woman, for cooks and waitresses?

No, we didn't allow women in the camps. In other words, you couldn't bring your wife. That was too much damned trouble. It wasn't until we built that road from Camel Creek to Railroad Pass. At Peterson's, the big house is burnt down. But all them beautiful trees and everything was a beautiful thing. My bookkeeper had a little boy. I let him and his wife come, and that's the first time I had a woman around the camp.

Now, how many years were you in charge of this major road building in this area?

Well, after we built the road from Railroad Pass—that is, we graveled it—a guy they called “Bullshit” Smith [chuckles] put up the grade. He put up the grade and then we graveled it to Austin. And I would say right on the highway construction, I was probably two-and-a-half years. And then I went to work for the Bureau of Public Roads. My boss was E.C. Brown. And the Bureau of Public Roads had the final say, you know, when your road, if you had a state contract, when that was done, then after the state'd approve it, then it had to be approved by Brown. So they was all scared of him. And I say after the contractors, I went to work under him. We got along like two peas in a pod, we never had no troubles at all.

Now where was that headquartered and where did you live?

Well, the headquarters was San Francisco. That was what they called your home port. So when I went to work for them, they had to furnish me a house, lights, fuel, and water, stuff like that.

You mean you had to move to San Francisco?

No, when they had me out here, see, I was away from San Francisco, which was what they called the home port.

Two things: Was this a federal organization?

Oh yeah, the Bureau of Public Roads was in charge. At that time, my uncle and Governor Oddie were the ones that got what was known as the Oddie-Colton Bill through Congress. And that was that Congress, the federal government was to pay 85 percent of the cost of building a road, or there never would have been any roads in Nevada—maybe one—if it hadn't been for that Audie-Colton Bill, and they were the ones that passed it, got it through Congress. And they paid 85 [percent], and that's what they pay today, I think, is 85 percent of the cost on the federal highways.

Now, were you stationed here in Austin?

Well, yes, I was then. Yes, they rented a house here for me and everything. They had to maintain the federal roads for two years, and when that was up, well then of course my job...So they give me another different job. I was in charge of the construction and maintenance of federal roads in Nevada—Ely and all through there. Was a real good job. I

had a crew over at Ely, over towards Delta, and I had one down towards Hot Springs—two-men crews. And the government furnished the trucks and stuff like that.

Did you still stay home-based in Austin?

Yes, I did. I stayed in Austin. I had a camp out at Hickison Summit. I had one out there, had a few men out there. They were going to get another man to take my place, the state was. Somebody said E.C. Brown didn't want that. They wanted me to go to California, and they offered me a beautiful job. I was to be in charge of the island down there where they had all this surplus—after the war had all this surplus stuff to give away. It was a terrific job, but I didn't like California.

Was this after World War II?

No, [World War] I.

Oh, after World War I.

Yeah. They offered me this nice job or a job up at Yuba Pass. Well, my wife and I went down to take a look at it. See, she was manager for what they called the UNIT telephone.

What's UNIT?

That was from Utah, Wendover, Montello, Ely, Ruth, Eureka, Austin, Manhattan, Round Mountain. My wife was in charge of that when she was sixteen years old.

Oh! Sounds like you both came from the same mold—so young and so responsible.

She was a brilliant woman.

First tell me what the initials UNIT stood for.

Let's see Utah Nevada and Idaho Telephone.

Now, we've gotta back up, because we didn't get you married, and you're talking about a wife, but I didn't hear about it. I want you to tell me where and when you met your wife and then how it led to your marriage and where you got married.

Well I met my wife when I was building the road out at Camel Creek. I used to come in, and of course she had charge of the telephone. They didn't have any long distance at that time. So if you wanted to get out, you'd have to use the wire system, which was, you know, the big old national wire system—Western Union and such. You had to go out, and they had an office there in town, Western Union and the other one, the other part of Western Union. They had the office there in town. And that's where you get out of here.

Where did she live when you met her?

In Austin here. As I say, she had charge of the telephone. She lived here—her and her mother and sister. Her mother came from the Azores in the early days here, her and her husband. She was teaching school in the Azores, her mother. Her mother learned to talk our language within two or three months. She had a very terrific mind. Being a school teacher, she was smart, and a very strong Republican. Oh my God! Oh, she used to hate anybody that talked [against] Hoover! She was for Hoover first and last. And of course, being a smart woman, she was pretty good, because he was a brilliant man. [laughter] The Democrats didn't like him, but he was a very brilliant man, probably the most brilliant President we ever had. Then part of the family

was born out here at Dry Creek, and she told me about that. I was her pride and joy.

You mean your mother-in-law's pride and joy?

Yeah. She used to say "the king can do no wrong." [laughter] Oh yes, she was a terrific cook. She always used to have something for me, and everything. And then she'd want to know, you know, whether she thoroughly understood what was going on in the presidents' races and all that stuff.

Did your wife's family all live here in Austin?

Yeah, they finally moved to Austin here and she made butter and sold milk. The kids peddled milk to make a livin'.

Before they lived in Austin, when they first came from the Azores, where did they live?

Out at Dry Creek.

Oh, right out there.

She said that one of the children was *born* out there—the oldest one, Marie. She was snowbound out there and her husband had gone lookin' for a job. She fed them children for five days on nothin' but potatoes.

How many children?

Three. And she couldn't carry them out of there, because she'd have to go clear down to Home Ranch. You couldn't even do that in *good* weather. So she was trying to keep 'em alive. That was the main thing, to keep 'em alive and warm. They had plenty of wood, "thank God for that," she said. And finally some guy that was a geologist or some kind of a federal guy came. She said, "If the good

Lord'd have come, I wouldn't be any more happy." This guy come, and he'd shot what they called a snowshoe rabbit, and he gave that to her. That's the first thing they'd had, other than potatoes, for quite a few days.

What year was that?

Well, I don't know that. That was a long time ago. I don't know exactly what year that was. It was about 1915 or 1916—along in there.

How long after that did they move into Austin?

Then soon as the snow went, and her husband come back, they moved into Austin, and that's when they sold milk. They got a couple of milk cows and they sold milk and butter to live on.

Do you know where they lived in Austin?

Well, no I don't know exactly. When I first knew 'em, they all lived where the Mormon church is up there now, at that site. They lived there.

Now how old was your wife, Louise Borrego, when you first met her?

Well, she was about the same age as me, around twenty-five.

Oh, so you weren't kids.

About the same age, a few months apart.

Tell me about your courtship, and how long after you met that you married.

Well, as I say, I met her when we was out at Camel Creek. We'd have to come in and send

telegrams and talk on the local telephone. That was in 1922. Of course I didn't court her or anything then, I just talked to her every day. She had her office on the main street here, still is. It's up where the bar is on the corner next to my station there. The telephone company had half of that building. And then the government Department of Agriculture, the Forest Service and myself, we had the other half of that building. So naturally, both being in the same building, I met her. Oh, I don't know, I guess I knew her about a year before we got married. Then the only thing I had, I always had a new car, paid for. I paid cash all the time, so I had a good car, and I had about sixty dollars when I got married. I had to pay the Catholic priest. He wanted to marry us, but I didn't want nuthin' to do with that.

She was Catholic and you were not?

Yeah. Naturally, prit near all them people, the Spanish people and that, were Catholics.

Was her family Basque?

No, they weren't Basque. [laughter] I can't think what her family is! [laughter] Not Basco. From the Azores. They had to be, oh [Portuguese]. We got this fella, the justice of the peace was the harness maker here in town and I was well acquainted with him. His first name was Mose. He had clubbed feet. He come in town and I said, "Mose, I got another job for ya." And he's thinking I got harnesses. And I said, "I want you to marry me." "Oh." I thought he'd die on the spot. Anyway, he said he would. [laughter]

How many came to your wedding?

Just me and my wife and her sister. And the justice of the peace. [laughter]

Did the family know you were going to do that?

No, they did not. Nobody knew. Just decided to do it, and that was it.

And then you didn't have to have that big church wedding!

No, no big church wedding. We left here to go to Reno. I had some business in Reno, and we left here and the roads was terrible. It'd take you about seven or eight hours. We finally got to Vista—that's right out of Reno there—and there was a train across the road. In those days, they didn't have to break them trains down. They'd leave you settin' there for hours. So we set there about two hours. We were supposed to be in Reno earlier, because the guy from Alaska was going to cook moose steaks for our supper when we got there. But we were laid up there two hours. As I say, they finally passed a law where they had to break them trains up. They had to break 'em up—they couldn't stay two hours there. Anyway, then we got to town. The ex-sheriff, Barr Francis, and the head of the Geological Survey had been waitin' in Reno for me to get in. And they'd hunted alt over Reno to find a good bottle of whiskey, bonded—had to be bonded—but they couldn't find it. They finally got ahold of a quart of creme de menthe. Anyway, then we finally got to Reno. Of course when we got there, then you're going to have to [chuckles] take a bath and change clothes, because you've got about a half-inch of dust on you, you know, the roads were real dusty. So we got to get clothes and get washed up and everything. And then we went over and had the moose steak.

And where was that?

In Reno.

I know, but where in Reno?

Elite Cafe, right across from the Golden. He came from Alaska and started what they called the Elite Cafe. That's where we had our wedding supper. [laughter] The moose steak.

So how long did you stay on your honeymoon?

Well, we had to come home the next day because my wife was the manager. So we came back the next day and then I got to look for a job. I'm out of a job, you know.

Now wait, what job had ended? I thought you were still working for the Bureau.

Well, I hadn't started then for the Bureau, see, after I quit the contractor. I quit the contractor when I got married.

Why?

Well, the reason why was because you couldn't take your wife with you on these jobs, so you was away from home all the time, and I decided to settle down a little. I'd seen all of the West I wanted to see. And I wanted to settle down. So then the only thing I could do, I was a top mechanic. In other words, there wasn't any of the boys that knew more about machinery than I did. And so the first year of our marriage was a pretty rough year on me because there wasn't enough mechanical work to make a living at, but I'd get maybe a couple days a week, you know. I was trying to figure out some way where... That's when I got the job with the Bureau of Public Roads, is then. E.C. Brown came through and I was very seriously thinking about taking the job that he'd offered me before, because I wasn't makin' a livin', and I was a pretty independent guy. I started doing a little mechanical work,

and then they found out that I really knew these outfits. Well then of course I picked up a little, and I could make as much on a weekend as I could make during the week working for the government. [laughter]

Wow! Now where did you and your wife first set up your first little home?

Well, I moved in with her and her mother. That's up where the Mormon church is now—the house was there.

Oh, I didn't know you lived there. Had her father died?

Yeah her father had died, yeah. So we lived there, I guess, about a year there. And then I bought a house up where... I don't know whether you know where Joe Streshley lives.

Oh yes, I interviewed Joe.

That house there. I bought that house from—Hogan owned it. I give him five hundred dollars for the house and three lots. Took me about a day to cut the rose bushes so I could get into my house. Then Louise and I rebuilt that house from practically scratch. There was a good china closet and a table that my wife hated with a passion. It took two men and a helper to even move it—it was solid oak. That's all the furniture that was in there. So then we had to start from scratch. We'd get enough one payday to buy a bed to put in the bedroom or buy a stove to put in the kitchen. I had the first gas stove in Austin. I bought it from the Salt Lake hardware. This bottled gas hadn't got to Austin yet. So I bought a wood stove from 'em. That was quite a thing, because you could put a bunch of pipes in the fuel box. And that'd heat your tank so you could take a hot bath, you had hot water. And on the back

of this stove is what they called a reservoir. That water was better than lukewarm all the time. That was a showpiece here in Austin, a new kind of a stove. And my wife's mother was a terrific cook, and she made sure them girls could cook. No arguments about that! I remember my mother came here to visit one time, years later. So Mrs. Borrego would cook this dinner for me and I said, "You know, that's the first good meal I've had in months." Well, I'd been eatin' out in these other restaurants, you know. "Oh," she says. She jumped on my wife right now. "You're starving your man! You're starving your man." Well my mother said, "He looks pretty healthy to me." But she wasn't about to go for that, "You're starving your man, and that's got to stop right now." [laughter] My mother wouldn't agree with it [laughter] because my wife was a terrific cook. Then I bought this house up there, and the first thing I had to check was what kind of a foundation it was on, and kind of jack it up and put a rock foundation. And as I got underneath, I found it was laid on what they called redwood sleepers, twelve-by-fourteen timbers. They'd stay there a million years, that redwood, you know. I just set her right back, and that was a big relief, a *big* relief, because that house was owned by Chinamen in the early days. Then we got to the floor, and the lumber in the floor is what they called whip-sawed out here in the saw mill. It was all shapes and thickness. And my wife had her eye on a hardwood floor. So we worked on that floor for a couple of days, trying to get it smooth and everything. In those days they didn't have stuff you could lay under your floor, you know, and make it respectable. We finally got that. My wife drilled where the nails was to go through this hardwood floor. She drilled that with a little hand drill every day, and she'd have that when I'd come off work

at night. She'd feed me and then we'd go to work.

Did she quit her job?

No, no. No, no, she never did. They moved the telephone office from the main street up to my house. She had the telephone up there so she could stay up there and we'd work in the morning before I went to work, and then we'd work at night—and of course Saturday and Sunday we *really* worked on that house. And we finally got a nice house out of it. I knew how to build a house. I was a good carpenter, and still am. I did all this work.

Really?!

I bought—these houses came from Gold Acres, Nevada. You know where Gold Acres is?

No.

You know where Crescent Valley is?

Uh-huh.

Well, it's right up above that, Gold Acres.

Now, when you say you bought the houses, what do you mean?

The mine closed down out there, and they put these houses up for sale—a whole bunch of 'em. And they beat me out of six more of 'em. I was going to make a motel out of the six houses.

Oh, how smart!

Anyway, this auctioneer I found out they was pretty good buys, you know. So they

put in a bid for *all* of 'em down there. From California, they put in a bid for all of 'em. But I wouldn't stand still, because I'd already bought these six. So they finally gave me these two houses for five hundred dollars.

What condition were they in? What did they look like?

Oh, they were pretty good—in fact, they were *real* good for houses that had been set abandoned, you know, for a couple of years. The six that I bought, I only ended up with two, but I only paid five hundred dollars for the two. And then a guy moved 'em from down in Crescent Valley. This old boy moved 'em to Austin to make this motel out of 'em. He moved 'em to Austin and had 'em on the lot up there above the garage. And then I hired an outfit, I give 'em \$10,000 to rebuild 'em.

I want to back up a little, because you keep talking about a garage that you had. Did you have the garage before you bought these houses?

Yes.

So let's back up and tell me about how you got that idea, and when you bought a garage.

I bought an interest in that garage at Wendover.

Wait a minute, you bought an interest in a garage in Wendover? Where is Wendover?

Wendover, Nevada, on the salt flats. Eb Jenkins and I was old buddies. We raced when we was kids. He's the one started the racing on the salt flats. He came through Austin with the *Mormon Meteor*. Of course he had a different engine in it, 'cause he couldn't run that race engine. And he was lookin' for money to

support that racing on the salt flats, which I put him onto some. And then we started that racing on the salt flats.

Now, is that in Lander County?

No, Wendover is the other side of Wales up here, a hundred miles, on the Salt Lake border.

Let's go through it quickly and get back to Lander County. Tell me quickly, did you say you started a garage there, or racing? I'm confused.

Yeah, garage and service station. We put in some cottages, for when Easton run there. I was on the timing board, the official timing board.

For the races?

Yeah. You had one mile to run before they started to measure you. That's so you could get up to top speed.

Did racers come from Lander County there?

Well, no, I was the only racer from Lander County.

So you were a racer?

Oh, I raced a couple of times—not in the big—time stuff, that is, like that, because that costs a million dollars to get a machine.

Did you have a racing car?

No, I raced Packards.

Now, we want to move away from there, because we want to get back to your activities here in Lander County. So I want to get back

to the roads again, and let's finish that part. You were telling how you worked on all these wonderful roads throughout the county. Now let's finish up and tell me if there's more on the roads.

Well, the first road we worked on was 8-A between here and Battle Mountain.

Yes, we got through 8-A and 50 and 40. Let's move along and finish the story of the highways.

Well then we worked on the road from here to Tonopah—finished this 8-A. Of course that took several years, you know. We finally got that through, to Tonopah.

Now, did you get involved in politics?

Oh yeah, I was the county chairman for the Republican Party from 1928 up 'til after I lost my eyes. I resigned. And Van Shovelin was a great friend of mine. He was the Democratic chairman.

Now, you said you gave it up when your eyes got bad. When was that, about?

Well, let's see, about ten years ago. It'd be a little over ten years ago since my eyes went bad. Oh yeah, we was in politics. Well, Lander County was really prominent. I'm not talking about just small politics. Bud Tandy was from Austin. He was the Speaker of the House in Reno. Then we finally got up to—we got Lemaire in that job, you know. And he's still there. We got him in there in a prominent seat still yet. We ain't lost track. Then we had...Lawrenson. Lawrenson was the union organizer in there. And of course with the cattlemen...

Now where did Lawrenson live?

In Battle Mountain. He was up Copper Canyon. And of course them unions weren't too popular with the cattlemen. So anyway... Let's see, who died? We had an appointment made by the Republicans. That's when you had your famous Wilson down there. We finally dethroned him. Anyway, it took a whole lot to do it. He spent a lot of Lander County money.

Really?!

Down in Battle Mountain. Anyway, why I appointed Ed Lawrenson to fill this job in the house of representatives there for Lander County. Well, these guys liked to fell dead when I done that. "My God! [laughter] You gonna appoint a union guy in there?! Oh! You must have cracked a nip! There's been too much rain down there, that softened your brain." [laughter] Well, anyway, he turned out to be a good one. The union was trying to talk me into running for governor. They were offering to dig up funds and every other thing, but I said, "You know what happens to a governor? When they get out of that job they're a pauper. They don't have a nickel, they don't have nuthin', and they just lost that time. They're all broke, all of 'em. I don't want nuthin' to do with that kind of stuff. But I still got a union card. I thought, "I belong to the railroad." Yeah!

Did you say you worked for the railroad?

Well, I did up at Pocatello, yeah. I worked there when the war first started there—First [World] War. Was working up there. My Uncle King is a general manager of the Union Pacific. And I worked up there and I liked it. I was on the wrecking crew. That's where I learned about wreckers.

Now you must have been just a young fella.

I was, really. But the fellow that was in charge of this, he took a liking to me and “put me under his wing,” you might say. He was real nice to me. And he liked the fact that we was just startin’ to learn a little somethin’ about engines. They had a big wreck and wrecked a bunch of tractors that had these diesel engines in. And I put some of them into handcars.

Is that when you first started to get into your expertise in mechanics and the kind of mechanical work that you did?

Yes. Really, when I had a shop to work, you know. Railroads have wonderful shops. Oh yeah, that’s when I started getting interested there in automobiles. I fiddled along, you know, every time I had a chance to.

We’re going to leave the railroad, and I want to bring you back, to get more on Lander County. You’re a leader in politics, you’re a leader on the highway, your garage is still working, still going strong. How long did you keep and work at the garage? this one here in town?

Well, we had two mechanics, and then I had the wholesale too, you know, Standard Oil. And I had two guys. Oh, and then four or five workin’ in the garage—that is, in the shop. And then two or three different people working in the service station.

Did you have a lot of cars? Once the highway went through, did that increase your business with cars that needed to be fixed as they came through Austin?

Oh yes, it did. In other words, it did, but we had all the local business because we run a top shop. We didn’t fiddle around. When we said we’d fix somethin’, that was our motto—

and we did. Of course, I had the background to go with on the trucks, because I was with the first fleet of trucks that was in Nevada. At Winnemucca, we shipped ’em from Salt Lake.

Wait a minute, what did you say? Repeat that, the first what with trucks? What did you say you were the first?

I was the boss of that job from Winnemucca to Rose Creek, and they shipped—this Strange and McGuire Paving—we shipped them trucks to Nevada on a train. We figured from Salt Lake to here, drive ’em overland, it’d take two weeks. With good luck you might make it in two weeks. So we shipped em to Winnemucca.

Shipped ’em on the train?

Yeah. And that’s where the first trucks were that hauled all the gravel on the highways in the State of Nevada.

About what time period is that?

In 1920. And they were the first. There was all straight trucker too around Nevada, but what I’m talkin’ ’bout is enough to haul the gravel, was them trucks from Winnemucca to Rose Creek. And I was in charge of that job.

I want to move you back to your garage. You were saying that your business picked up, you were repairing a lot of local vehicles. Now was Louise, your first wife, was she still there with you, working?

Yes, she was still managing the telephone, and oh yeah, we had a terrific business there. Of course I was known all over the state, and they knew that we had top mechanics.

Now, when you needed to order body parts for your cars and trucks, where did you get them?

Well, all the parts, you know, came mostly from Reno—a lot from Fallon. Of course they had a couple of part houses in Fallon. Most of the parts came from Fallon or Reno. And where they came from there, I don't know.

Now, when people were driving here, and let's say they had car problems and had to bring it to you, would they have to stay here in Austin about how long until their cars would be fixed?

Well, they'd have to stay there, it all depends on what you had to do.

Was there a lot of that, where it brought people staying?

Quite a few, yeah, there was accommodations, you know. Each hotel had seven or eight rooms, and some of the people'd get together. They liked this country, they loved it, and maybe while we was fixin' the car they'd organize and get out on the stream and do a little fishin'.

So your repair shop brought business and helped the economy here.

Yeah. Oh yeah! Oh, absolutely. We were the only ones, outside the county and the state, that had steady employees in town. And we were the first ones, I was the first one in Lander County to give the employees a ten-day leave with pay.

That was the union in you! [laughter]

Yeah, I guess it might have been. Anyway, why, they got ten days and nobody else did in town.

Is that the way you kept your good health?

Well, yes, and the fact that we run a good place. I'm a pretty nice fellow, but I run a tight ship. We run a first-class place. While we couldn't do all the machine work and stuff like that, we'd either take it to Fallon or Reno where we had...And a lot of people'd break down, and we had to tie-in with this fellow at Fallon, had that junk yard, or used car. Somebody'd blow a motor, maybe we could pick up a real good motor from him real cheap or somethin'.

From that period you were doing really well and doing a lot of work. Did your business ever slow down or have any problems or economic problems?

No, we never did. As I say, we always had more work than we could do. The money to be made is in selling. In other words, we'd sell you anything.

Tell me some of the things you would sell.

Sell you [chuckles] anything you could name [laughter] we'd git it!

Like what?

We had wholesale contacts all over. Some of them came from the time I worked as superintendent for the highways.

Name some of the things that were some of the best sellers, what you would sell.

Well, we was, at that time, the big thing was stoves, cook stoves. See, Standard Oil had came out with that Flame-O, that bottled gas. Every woman was lookin' to buy a stove and refrigerator, and they sold like hotcakes.

Did you keep a sample there for them to see?

Well, Standard Oil, you see, believe it or not, down where they sold the gas, had stoves, refrigerators, and water heaters and anything. And they had a kitchen. They run that kitchen all through Nevada, Battle Mountain and everywhere, that taught all their employees how to handle them stoves and stuff, you know, and cook on 'em. We had to show the women you could cook, and the big thing was, we'd whip up an angel food cake. That was one of the hardest things, the women claimed, to bake in a coal and wood stove, because you couldn't keep a constant heat. And we'd whip up an angel food cake in a few minutes and throw it in the oven and show em how to do it.

Do you have any pictures of that equipment there?

No. I might have. When we dig through all this stuff later...Of course it was quite a little job, you know, to pipe into their houses, the gas lines.

In other words, you also did the installation?

Oh yes! And repairs. I can tear a stove down, or refrigerator. As blind as I am...

You're talented in so many areas, it's just amazing!

Well, you see, it required it. It was required to get—in a business like I had, you had to be what they called a “jack of all trades.” And then of course I had that good mechanical background to start, and the construction, and knew how to handle people.

That's most important.

That's the most important part. You've gotta have a tight organization. One of my employees stayed with me thirty-five years.

Oh! Well, you know that is a commendation to you. And also, you probably built an honest reputation.

Oh yeah! Oh yeah!

That was important.

As I say, your word in those days was your bond. If you wasn't any good, you were out. You had to have a good reputation. Like the bank, I could go in there and say, “Well, I need \$25,000” and they'd just hand it out to you. You had to have—if you was a good worker and honest, you got along pretty good—anybody. But those that didn't have a reputation, a little shady, they were sort of ostracized, you know.

Tell me about the war years [World War II]. How did that affect you?

Well, when war broke out, I went into Reno and enlisted. I had volunteered to work on the night shift for the Army engineers on the airport down there. And I worked there. On January 8, they called me up and they put me in charge of a train going to Virginia and I had two hundred and fifty from Nevada. There was all kinds of men that knew me and had sons that were going to go, *had* to go, and they talked them into enlisting then, because they thought they'd be under me *all* the time, see. Well, we had two hundred and fifty from San Francisco, and two hundred and fifty from Nevada. And we left and went to Norfolk, Virginia.

Now, two questions: One, where did the train leave from, and two, were you in the military, or were you working as a civilian?

No, I was in the military, then, see. I'd already enlisted, when the train left from Reno. The Navy goes first-class. They're not like the Army. The Army has to cook on the thing and sleep. Well, we went first-class, and then we stopped at what they called Harvey Houses and had breakfast and lunch and supper. When we got to St. Louis, we picked up two hundred and fifty WACs (Women's Army Corps) on this train. I never felt so terrible about women in my life. They were on this boxcar that had been rebuilt to haul troops and they'd been on that two days with...If you've ever been on a compartment in a railroad, you know how small that toilet... And that's the only place they had to go, two hundred and fifty of 'em.

Now you said the rest of your group went first-class. Why were the WACs not first-class?

Well, they was in the Army.

Oh, and you were transporting Navy people? Who were you transporting?

All Navy.

Okay, you were in the Navy?

Navy or Marines.

Now, we don't want to get too much into the military away from Lander County, so I want to ask a few questions, because we really want Lander County history. So several questions: How many young men from Lander County do you know went into the service during the war?

Well, I don't know exact number. I *did* know, but I don't remember, and there's quite a few. At the time I enlisted, I was the first one that enlisted. You see, there was some drafted,

and the draftees was all over. But I was the first one to enlist.

Now, we want to go quickly through the military years, because that's not Lander County, so I'm going to ask you just to tell me how long you were in, where you went, and when you came back, without a lot of detail, because this is a Lander County interview.

Well, went to Reno and as I say we went on the train to Norfolk. We weren't too long in Norfolk. The first thing they did in Norfolk was separate me from these westerners. [laughter]

Now we don't want to go into great detail. What I want to know is how many years and where you were, without detail, because we want to get you back to Lander County.

Well I was in three years and I think four-and-a-half months.

Where did you serve?

Well, as I say, we went from Treasure Island to south. We were unescorted, and we had the Grumman planes on board.

And where did you go, where did you serve in your three years?

We went to American Samoa. We was there a short time, and we went to Wallace Island and built an airstrip. And then they come back to American Samoa. And then we went up to New Caledonia. My outfit was going to Tarawa. When we got New Caledonia there in the hospital, the chief of medicine asked me if I had malaria and I said didn't think so. And he said, "I don't think so either. I don't think you fellas have got malaria." So he

cut out about fifty of us, we had elephantiasis from the mosquitoes.

Oh my! How long did you have to stay? Did you stay in the hospital?

Well, they didn't know what to do about it, they still don't know what to do about it today. So it wasn't very long in the hospital, but it stopped me from going to Turowa. That was probably the toughest battle of any war.

So where did you go from there? Where did they send you then?

Then they issued an order in Washington that any of us that had that elephantiasis be sent to the States. And the funny part about it, my doctor, Lombardi, the prominent doctor from Reno, and Dr. Wells from Tonopah, they're the ones that put what they called the "green tag" around my neck and sent me home.

Now, when did you come home? What year was that?

Well, I come home in 1943.

Now, I have several questions that I want you to tell me about. What was it like when you got home? Did you see any effects of the war in Austin?

No, not too much. Of course by that time there was quite a few young fellows that'd been drafted into the Army. But I don't think it had too much effect. It wasn't like World War I, comin' home. They had ticker tapes and all that stuff. But we came home gradually, see, different. So they didn't have a big celebration.

Now, you had been separated over three years, right, from your family? Or had you been home?

Yeah, a little over two years from my family.

So now tell me, when you came home, how you picked up on your life.

Well, of course my wife had run the garage and service station. And I just went back to work! [laughter]

Were you still living in the apartment?

In the garage, yeah. Yeah, St. John LaBorde, a sheep man, threw a big picnic for me and Manuel Branca—he came home about the same time in a different outfit. We had a big pic-a-nic down at Silver Creek. Quite a picnic!

Your eyes are all lit up. What do you mean, a lot of liquor?

Well [chuckles] yeah! [laughter]

You were celebrating.

Getting ready to come home—of course people from Austin was all invited. Only about two men [laughter] was able to stand up! [laughter] Me and another fellow—I always watched that drinkin'—we were doin' that Spanish dance. [laughter]

Were you a dancer?

Oh yeah, I was a pretty good dancer. That's what the women said, anyway. Yeah, we were doing [laughter] that dance. I can see that Philip yet, jumpin' three feet off the ground and clickin' them heels. [laughter] Well, the people of course were awful nice.

How was your garage doing during those years?

Well, of course we had a big stock when I left, and that helped. There wasn't as much stock left when I got home as when I left. But it had run good. One fellow I had, had what they called a thrombose heart, and he was never drafted, see, so I had a *real* top mechanic all the time—Louise did.

Now let's move on. You came back and the garage was still going. Was your main work from then on with the garage?

Well, of course I wasn't out of the service when I first come home. I was on that what they call "overseas leave." Then that was thirty days. Everybody got that. Then when I went back to the doctor they was experimenting with this elephantiasis. They had decided that a dry climate might help. So they sent us back again. I got sixty days.

And sent you back home?

Yeah. Well, then after I got back after that sixty days, the clerk says, "Say, you never took your thirty-day leave. When you gonna take that?" I said, "Well, I've been thinkin' about it." "Well," he said, "If I were you, I'd start next week." So I did. So I was home practically ninety days. Then we went back, as I say, and they kicked us out at Treasure Island. There was quite a lot of servicemen, as I say, in World War I, come back to New York, you know, in a big flock of ships, see. But these here guys come back a few at a time.

Of course, you came back before the war ended—there was nothing to celebrate yet, right?

Yeah. We came home on the... That's a hospital ship called the *Azalea*.

Where did the ship land, and how did you get back here to Austin?

Well, of course the ship landed in San Francisco, and then they kept us down there, I don't know, experimenting with the elephantiasis, oh, I guess maybe two months at Hayward—Camp Parks, they called it. That's where we got kicked out.

Now, did you have any after-effects from that disease?

Well, yeah. It's caused by a mosquito bite, causing these worms in your lymph glands—millions of 'em. And if they move in a big bunch, you know, that makes your hands or your skin stretch. That's where the soreness comes from, it stretching your skin.

Did they put you on a medical disability?

Well, they didn't know what to do, to be honest with you. And honestly, the doctors, they did not know what to do. No. No, I didn't want a medical [discharge] from the service. I didn't want that. So then they passed that law where a certain age—which is up in the group I was in—could retire out.

And did you get some disability pay for that, or retirement pay?

No, they didn't pay then. [laughter]

You didn't get any?

Nothing, never got a nickel.

Okay, let's bring you back to Austin now. You're out of the service. Now follow your life for me, for the time you were out of the service and

back in Austin. I want to follow pretty quickly the highlights after you came out.

Well, as I say, we started to runnin' the garage again and service station. And we organized this Highway 50, Lincoln Highway Organization. That was Harvey Toy from the Bank Club, and then people from Reno, Fallon, Austin, Eureka and Ely. And they elected me president of this. At that time it was a Nevada and California association, the Lincoln Highway. Then it was made into a *national*, and they elected me the national president.

Do you have any certificates and things that you can share with us to add to the interview? Certificates, letters, or records of your high position, showing your role in that organization that you can let us copy?

Oh yeah, there must be some of the meetings, the minutes.

They must have given you a certificate, you know, or...

[laughter] We was too broke all the time to pass out certificates! [laughter]

Now tell me a little about the progress of what this organization accomplished while you were there.

As I say, my uncle and Oddie, got through Congress, prior to this time, what they called the Audie-Colton Bill. That's where they gave the states 85 percent of the money to build these roads. Of course then they wanted to start building the roads, see. Well, the first road we worked on was Highway 50, to get it graveled and oiled.

What year was that started?

Well, soon as the war ended, they started the highway. Then they built different projects, you know, along this, and along Highway 40 into Battle Mountain there. And then they started to oil 'em. The Highway Department first decided that the most road could be built in the flats, you know, for the money. Then they saved the mountains 'til later. Let's see, then they let these different jobs, ten, twenty-mile jobs, you know, here and there. That was under one fund. And then when Ike [President Dwight D. Eisenhower] come in, they got this extra money for highways across the nation: 80 and 50 and all these highways.

The big interstate?

Yeah, the big interstate. Well, we didn't want the interstate through here at Austin. We didn't want it. And Eureka didn't.

You didn't want all that traffic?

Well, you see, it would bypass the towns. And I warned Battle Mountain about that too, because we was in the know, and we still are. We know what's going on in this highway business. Of course the last few years, first we had a guy we paid I think ninety dollars a month and a little per diem to represent... Well, the first one we had was a woman, and she collected part of that money for us, and a big part for herself. Well, we caught up with *her*. Then we got this other fellow, Doyle Davidson, and he's still there.

Now, what was his role, what was he supposed to do?

Well, was to promote traffic. He gave speeches all over the United States, including several in Carson and different places. He appeared before all these Chambers of Commerces. And then we was trying to build up the feeder roads coming into Highway 50, and he went to all these Chambers of Commerces, even to Washington, D.C., and made several speeches—got to be quite a speaker. And they always said that we were the best-equipped and most knowledgeable association in America. They said that all the time. Like the association in Battle Mountain and them, they'd run thirty days and then they'd defunct. Well now to come back, they wanted to kind of break this thing up. So we established the Frontier Highway. That was strictly a Nevada outfit.

I'm a little confused. Was that a separate outfit from the...

Yeah, from the Highway 50.

And were you part of that?

Yeah, Newt Crumley was the president and I was the vice president of that association, Frontier. Our main object was, big object, was to get rid of them billboards. And we worked on them billboards, and we finally got 'em away, and then they've finally come back. Yeah, we did that. And that broke up because, you know, it took up too much of our time, and no pay. So that finally went by the way. It lasted a couple of years, and we got a lot of these little feeder roads built into Nevada, designated. First they gotta go through the legislature, and the Highway Board, to get designated—like the road between here and Battle Mountain, that was 8-A. But first you gotta get it designated before the Highway [Board] could do

anything about it. And then we wanted to get the road to Tonopah. We had that added on to 8-A, and we got that feeder road built in. And then of course to Battle Mountain where we got 95 and them comin' in there. We were instrumental, you might say, in probably acquiring it. [chuckles]

Well I've noticed, you have wonderful roads in this whole area of Nevada, for small towns—some of the finest. And I've been driving all around the state.

Lander County, of course we were always pretty hep to what was going on.

I want to ask two questions: When did 50, in this area—at least from here across the state—when did that finish? And how did all of this affect the Austin area?

Well, of course, gradually, it affected the same as Battle Mountain. You gotta build that traffic up little-by-little. And it changed Austin. Well, as I say, Austin in the early days was a trade center for Round Mountain, Manhattan, Belmont, Gold Field. The furthest inland the railroad came, was here to Austin. And it sort of changed it then gradually, to tourists.

You mean when the automobiles and the roads started, it brought tourists?

Yeah, we could see that the automobile was going to take over.

Now what year are we talking about where it was a bustling center? And when did that change? You said it was a big trading center when the mines were real busy. When did that slow down? When did the mines start to close, and did that slow down?

Well, they were pretty well [all closed], except in Round Mountain. One mine here had a few men working for it, but they were mostly all shut down. See, during the war, the government shut the gold mining down.

I want to hear more about that.

Well, of course if you had a gold mine, you couldn't get any supplies or anything—you just had to close her down. Of course if you had copper or barite or somethin' like that, you could keep runnin', 'cause they needed that. But they shut the gold mines down. We had a mine there north of Gerlach at that time. They shut her down.

Was that your mine?

Yeah, we had one—well, I was *partner* in a mine north of Gerlach one known as the Mountain Mule, I understand there's a big operation there now, in the flat. They found the gold went over in the flat, and they drilled and found it.

Now, where did they find it?

In the flats below where we had the mine. That's where they found it. And they've got a big operation going there, I understand.

What happened to your mine?

Well, we sold it. I sold it to a fellow by the name of Bellinger. In the early days, he designed the body for the Cadillac, and then he sold that to General Motors, and then he became the president of General Motors. That's who we sold it to.

What year did you sell it?

Well, let's see, we sold it in, I guess about 1929, we sold it.

As vice president of Highway 50, did you have to attend a lot of meetings?

Yeah, and then, you know, we had a political meeting now and then. And the legislature, we'd go down there a couple of times when that was in session. But, you know, a lot of them meetings, we'd go down there and back the same day. And some of 'em would be a couple of days. Yeah, we had quite a lot of meetings.

About how many days a month would you be traveling to meetings?

Well, some months I wouldn't be traveling at all. Then maybe one or two meetings. As I say, we got back just as fast as we could. And then it'd probably be a day. It'd all depend on how good we thought it was going to help Lander County. We spent quite a little time. That's one of the reasons why I quit the Fish and Game Commission, was the fact that we had so many phone calls. Everybody knew that I'd been on it since it started, you know, and the guys from all over Californiad call you after they'd stopped, you know, when they come through. And they'd stop when they'd come back, and then we were sort of an information bureau for them. You know, where the deer was and sage hen was and all that stuff. And it took up so much of my time that I finally resigned from it, because that phone rang during the deer season or sage hen season continuously.

Well, after you resigned, didn't they still call you, not knowing you resigned?

Oh yes. It slowed up a little, quite a little then, because then I'd say, "Well, you know

I'm not current," but I was current on what's going on.

Now I know your private life changed because you said you then married Donna, who had children. And then you had a family. Tell me then how your life changed, after this marriage and a family.

Well, it didn't change too much. I'd always had kids around me. I had the Boy Scouts and the Rainbow Girls and all that. And I've always had children around me. So it didn't change too much. Of course, you know, instead of going alone someplace, you'd probably take your family with you.

Is that when you put these two houses together and moved here?

Yes, see we was living up at the garage at the time I got married the second time. And then moved these houses down here and put em together and remodeled, did all the carpenter work, all the electrical work, all the sewer work. We did that, me and Freddie that had the International [Hotel] at that time. That's the first time he'd ever done any carpenter work and this kind of work.

Now who is Fred?

Freddie Jolly. He was married to the Swedish lady that's got that now. He moved to Colorado. But he had the building up there where they got the stairway they used to pull up off the ground.

So he helped you fix up this place? He worked with you on this place?

Yeah, he had never done any of this kind of work, but he caught on mighty fast, and he

was a good worker, real good worker and an honest boy. We did all this ourselves. I never called in any help.

How long did it take to get it together, and when did you and your family move into it?

Well, I had a fella that wanted to lease the garage, Whit Skinner, he's the one put in the drive-in up here.

You mean the Toiyabe?

Yeah. He wanted the apartment up there too, to live in. And so I told him we couldn't possibly get a place to stay under a month or two months. And that's when we moved these places down there, and we lived just this side, just this one first, the bedroom, the bathroom, and the kitchen.

The whole bunch of you?

Yeah, me and the family, yeah. In other words, we had two bedrooms and this room and the kitchen and a bath. And then later, as we got that done, we moved into the other house in there and got that under way. It was four bedrooms. See, originally, these were three-bedroom houses. There was one bedroom where part of the kitchen is there now. They were for the mines, see. So then I ripped that out and put that beam up in the ceiling, the same as I did in there. And did all the ceilings. I dropped these ceilings down two inches to get that dead air space, for heat and cold. And then all these outside walls, we dropped in three, four inches and insulated them. And they were all pretty well insulated, because they were down at Gold Acres. That's cold country, you know. They was down there 'fore we got 'em, and they were at that time when they were built, the thoughts

was on insulation, so they were pretty well-insulated when we got 'em. Then by dropping the outside wall and these ceilings, that made this an outstanding house with insulation. And I put a furnace in the basement, I had a basement, dug a basement under this house before we moved it on.

So what year did you move in the first part?

Well, I think, oh, along about 1959, I guess, about, when we moved em down there, I think.

Now, Donna had two girls you adopted?

Yeah.

And then did you have any children together?

Well, then later...No, I didn't have any children [from my first marriage]. Kjerstine and Ovidia [McGuiness] are my children with Donna.

And you adopted them?

No, Donel and Melene were the two oldest daughters I adopted.

The two oldest?

That's Melene Ramos, lives uptown here now, running the service station. And then Donel Wilcox. Her husband is a building contractor.

Now, I'm confused. Were they Donna's daughters?

Yes, they were Donna's daughters.

And then were there other children?

Well, there was other children, two of 'em. The little boy [Leroy] by Donna died a few days after birth. Then the little daughter died a few days after birth.

[expressing concern] Oh. So then you and Donna and the two girls lived together here. That was the family?

That's when we started, yeah. Then when we got the other two, we *still* lived here. We got four bedrooms. This is a big house.

Did you then lease the garage?

Well, yeah, I tried leasing it, and that was a bum business. They don't take care of 'em.

So then what happened with the garage? Did you retire from it?

Of course I retired. Then I took it back.

In other words, when the lease ended, you took it away from him?

Well, not from him, because he was pretty good—but some of the leasers after, I took it away from. And now we're running it again ourselves.

In other words. You're running it now and hiring people?

Well, my son-in-law, Joe Ramus, is running it for us. The service station business has picked way up since we started to operate. In other words, we're gettin' a big business up there now.

What is causing all the increase?

Well, part of it was that the people from all over Highway 50 knew me, and they all traded

there in the early part. We had 90 percent of that business. We sold 90 percent of the fuel in this town. So they're all comin' back. They're all my age now, the oldest ones; and the kids that went to the university, we took care of 'em. Our sign [read] "Let us be your home away from home." We took care of people, and tried to help people that was in trouble. After the Western Union and that moved out of there, then the only way you could get money into Austin was through the banks, transferred from one bank to another. And we helped people with all kinds of... You'd be surprised what we did help 'em with, and what their problems is. You know, that traveling public has got every problem in the world. They don't miss a money problems, mechanical problems, family problems—they've got everything, you know. And we sort of kind of help as kind of a referee in a lot of things.

Now, was Donna involved in your business?

Yeah, after I married Donna, why of course she helped too. She had a fine education, and she helped—they *all* helped. Everybody helped. She kind of liked that anyway, she liked to meet people, and worked around the station, gassed cars and stuff like that. We always had a man there for tire repairs and greasing cars.

[Someone came to take Mr. Casady to the Senior Center to lunch—a daily custom and the highlight of his day. That abruptly ended the interview. Before we could schedule another session on my next trip to Austin, Leroy Casady died, October 20, 1993.]

OLE LEROY CASADY PHOTOGRAPHS



LEROY CASADY



Louise Borrego Casady, O. Leroy Casady's first wife

OLE LEROY CASADY

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Ole Leroy Casady Interview

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ROBERT E. CHIARA**PREFACE**

Robert Chiara's paternal grandparents were born in Italy. They immigrated to the United States, eventually establishing a ranch in Slavin Canyon south of Battle Mountain, Nevada. His father, Louis Batiste Chiara, was born there in 1881. He worked for ranches and mines, and met Robert's mother at Hilltop Mine near her family's ranch. After working at ranches in Fallon, they bought a house in Battle Mountain, where Robert was born in 1918. His father became Deputy Sheriff of Lander County and was killed in the line of duty. His mother worked for the newspaper, Battle Mountain Scout, setting type. She also took in schoolteachers as boarders to support herself and Robert. Robert tells about his school days, and the separate building called "the Indian school." As a young boy, Robert often spent summers with Grandfather and Grandmother Estes and rode horses with his uncle. Horseback riding was always a favorite activity, and he and friends would ride into town and tie their horses at the hitching

rack at the Lemaire Store on Front Street. He describes early Battle Mountain when the Nevada Central train between Austin and Battle Mountain was running, transporting supplies to Austin. Cattle and sheep were brought to Battle Mountain from the ranches to ship by rail, until the roads were paved and highways built. The trucks were cheaper and faster, and ended the railroad lines.

After high school, Robert worked as delivery boy and clerk for Horton Mercantile store, delivering orders with a little truck twice a day. Then he went to work on a crew for Engineers Limited when the transcontinental telephone lines were being built for Nevada Bell.

During World War II he was drafted and went overseas for three years. When he came home in 1945, he met Wanda Bobo, a telegraph operator on the railroad. She was sent to Battle Mountain from Fort Worth, Texas to a telegraph school in Battle Mountain. They met at weekly dances, and married in 1946. Robert had leased the Trout Creek Ranch, then he and Wanda bought the

Wally Lee Ranch where they lived for forty-four years. They had two children. They had cattle and raised hay, but Robert had to go to work to supplement their income. He worked at Natomas on a gold dredge and describes the equipment. He also worked at Copper Canyon in the power plant and at a barium mill in Battle Mountain. He found time to do some prospecting, took out some mine claims and describes in detail the assessment work, filing and requirements involved in holding the claims. Wanda took care of the ranch, and he spent weekends doing ranch work. But eventually she too had to get a job, and was the cook manager at the hospital for twenty-two years. In 1988 they decided to retire. They sold their cattle and leased their ranch until it was sold in 1993. They bought a spacious home with a large lawn, trees, and a garden in a rural area close to Battle Mountain. There's plenty of room for their two horses and dog. Robert and his grandson enjoy riding the horses and fishing is another favorite recreation. Wanda enjoys reading and goes into town to shop every Friday. Robert goes into town every day to get the mail and he and Wanda like to visit friends and family. A champion cribbage player, Robert won a trophy in Austin and has several friends he plays cribbage with regularly. After a lifetime of constant hard work, Robert and Wanda are enjoying and appreciating their retirement.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Robert Chiara at his home at 195 West Second Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, May 14, 1993.

Good morning, Bob, I'm pleased to be here to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Could you give us your full name?

Robert Chiara: Yeah, Robert E. Chiara.

And where were you born?

Battle Mountain, Nevada, right here.

What date?

July 2, 1918.

I want to ask you a little bit about your father's parents. Where did they live, where were they born?

They were born in Piemonte, Italy, both of them.

Do you have any idea when they came to the United States?

No, I don't.

Did you meet them, did you know them?

I knew my grandmother [Rosa Rozzi Chiara], but I was only two years old when she died.

And where did she die?

Here in Battle Mountain.

So they lived here in Battle Mountain, your grandparents?

Well, my grandmother had a ranch out here. Grandpa died, he drowned in the Snake River.

Oh my!

Well, there's two stories. Rose [Chiara Filippini, Robert's cousin] says he was killed in a snowslide in Oregon, and I'd always heard that he was drowned in the Snake River, so I don't know.

You take your pick! [chuckles]

Yeah.

So they established a ranch. Where was that ranch?

Right south of here, about eight miles, nine miles.

Do you know where and when your father was born?

Slavin Canyon. He [Louis Batiste Chiara] was born in 1881 [October 17], I believe. Yeah, 1881.

And what canyon?

Slavin Canyon, south out here.

South. And is that part of Battle Mountain?

Well, it'd be the Battle Mountain area.

Alright. And did he live most of his life there on the ranch?

Oh no.

No. Alright, tell me a little about your dad.

He worked for other ranches, and for mines, at last he was Deputy Sheriff here in

Lander County. And he was killed in the line of duty.

Okay, now let's go back to when he met your mother [Josephine Estes]. Do you know where and how he met your mother?

Well up in Hilltop, Grandma [Laura Wright] and Grandpa [Harvey] Estes lived in Corral Canyon and Dad was at Hilltop, and they met.

Did you know your grandparents on your mother's side?

Oh yes.

Tell me a little bit about your Grandpa first, Grandpa Estes.

Well, he had a ranch. Grandpa come here from Colorado. He was a teamster, had teams—teamed in Colorado, and then he teamed here.

Tell me what that means, for people who don't know what teaming is. What did he do?

He had horses. They pulled ore wagons with ore and groceries and stuff.

Like freight wagons?

Yes ma'am, that's right.

Did he own that business?

Yeah, he had his own teams.

Do you know when he came to Nevada? Did he work here a while and then settle?

My mom and dad were married in 1914. I'd judge it was in the early 1900s that they moved here.

And what about your mother's parents?

That's who I'm talking about now.

You were telling me about your Grandpa's freight work with the teams, and that they met at Hilltop.

Right.

Can you tell me about your mother's family? Were they living at the Hilltop Mine?

No, they lived at what they called Corral Canyon, about six miles from Hilltop, but they come through Hilltop to go to town.

What were your mom s parents' doing at Hilltop? Were they settled there?

No, they had a little ranch.

Oh, it was their own ranch.

Yes ma'am.

Now then, your mom and dad married. And then where did they settle to live?

Well, when they bought a home, they bought it in Battle Mountain, but they worked in Fallon before that, at the ranches.

Did they live in Fallon?

Yes ma'am.

They worked around on the ranches?

Uh-huh.

Then they bought a house in Battle Mountain?

Yes ma'am.

How tong after they were married were you born?

Four years.

Was there a hospital here in Battle Mountain?

Oh, I was born in what they call "midwife."
[chuckles]

Okay. In your house?

No in her house, I guess. I'm not too sure about that.

That's alright. So then you were born right here in this town.

Yes ma'am.

Now tell me about, from the first memories that you can remember, about your father, what he did during the time of your early childhood.

Well, he worked on ranches, and he worked in mines, and then later he went to work for the police force here. There was only one deputy here—there was a constable and a deputy. July 16, 1932, he was killed.

Oh my! How was he killed?

Shot! by someone.

When he was...

On duty.

Oh! what a sad story.

I have a copy of that little thing I can give you.

That's important to have. And tell me, did you have brothers and sisters?

No ma'am, only child.

You were the only one. Tell me about your mom. What was she doing through your childhood? Was she doing anything outside the home, or busy with the family?

Well, housewife plus she worked at a paper. There's a little paper here, Battle Mountain Scout. She set type.

Oh, that's interesting!

Yeah! It is.

Do you have anything that she set?

[laughs] I don't know, we didn't keep any of that stuff.

Tell me a little bit, going back to your childhood, about the time you were entering elementary school. Then you would have some memories. Tell me a little bit about what your daily life was like when you were, let's say, six, seven, eight years old. Were you still living in Battle Mountain?

We lived right close to...What the courthouse is now was the old grammar school. I went to school all eight years there. Liza Pierce was the first teacher, my first

teacher. And then I went on up from there: Mrs. Rose...I can't remember them all. Mary S. Black, Dave Norman. Oh, I had a bunch of teachers.

Was at a one-room schoolhouse?

Oh no, it's big. Eight classes.

Amazing, for a town that size. How many students in your classes?

When we graduated from high school, there was twelve.

And what about in your early elementary school classes?

Oh, maybe twenty, first grade, like that, you know.

Were there a mixture of different groups? Like were there some Mexican children, Indian children, a mixture of different kinds of children from workers?

We all went to school together, except the Indians.

Where did they go?

There was a school behind, a building behind, that the Indians went to school.

Was there a reason?

I don't know. My aunt, Mrs. Miller, taught them, the Indians. And then later, they integrated everything. But I mean, at that time, when I was in the lower grades, they had, ...That's what we always called it, "the Indian school."

Did you ever mix with them on the playground?

Oh yeah! We were all friendly—it wasn't that. I don't know why they...

Maybe the language difference?

No, they talked English. The Mexicans, I could see it. You know, they talked Spanish.

Was there a difference in the size of the classrooms when transient workers came through working on the mines or railroad?

I never noticed it. Not much change.

Then go back into your household and tell me, did you have running water then?

No ma'am. No, no running water, no bathroom.

Any heat?

Oh yes, yes.

What did you use for heat?

Coal. Coal stoves.

Where did you get the coal?

We bought it from the Horton Mercantile Company, delivery.

It was delivered?

Yes ma'am.

Did they deliver ice, when there wasn't refrigeration?

Yes, we had ice. I remember that.

What did your mom cook on? What was the cookstove?

A coal stove.

A coal stove too?!

Uh-huh. And then later we got an electric stove.

When your grandmother, your mother's mother, was still alive, did you ever live together? Did she live with you?

No, but I'd go up to the ranch and stay in the summer

Okay, tell me, did you go when you were young, to the ranch?

Oh, probably nine years old. Eight or nine was the earliest.

Would you go in the summer?

Yes ma'am.

For how long?

Oh, a couple of weeks, a month maybe. It varied.

Tell me what you did out on the ranch when you were a kid.

Oh [laughs] I can't remember. We rode horses and... We covered a lot of country, we saw a lot of country up there.

Who else was there on the ranch with you?

Well, my uncle. He's only four years older than me. Stanley Estes was his name. We were close enough together in age that we could do things together.

Did you have chores? Did you help out?

Oh yeah, yes ma'am.

Tell me what your grandma was like. Do you remember her?

Sure.

Tell me about her.

Just a grand old lady, that's all. [laughter] She was really good to us. You know, never scold. Just a nice... Well, so was my grandfather. They were really nice. I knew my Grandfather and Grandmother Estes, but I didn't know on the Chiara side well.

And was your grandma able to be active until she died?

Oh yes! Yes ma'am.

She took care and worked hard?

Oh yeah.

I want to know a little bit. Tell me, describe to me, the kind of person your father was. Tell me about your father. Did he speak Italian?

He spoke seven languages.

Tell me them.

I don't know what they were, but they told me they'd always get him for an interpreter at trials. He should have.

Bright man.

He should have capitalized on that, you know. I don't know what: Italian, some French, Latin, Spanish.

Oh my gosh! Where did he get his education?

I don't know where he learned all these languages. He was very good. And Basque—he learned Basque.

Now was he Basque?

No, Italian.

But he learned it. Did he speak any other language? Did he speak Italian in the home?

He would with Uncle Frank, but I never learned it.

You didn't learn it.

Mother didn't speak it, so...

So they would speak English.

They spoke English.

Tell me a little bit more about him. I want to get an idea of what your father was like, beside all these languages what kind of a personality, what kind of a father?

Just couldn't have got a better one. And he and Uncle Frank—Uncle Frank would come over and they'd play cribbage, talk Italian and chew tobacco and spit in a can.

Now what was your uncle's name?

Frank. That's Rose's [Chiara Filippini] dad.

Now tell me a little bit about your mom, what kind of a person she was.

Well, Mom had a lot of sickness when I was younger. And as time when on, she seemed to get better with age. You know what I mean? Really. She had a lot of stomach trouble, and I don't remember what—all, but it seem to me like she was sick a lot.

Frail?

Yeah, she was a small woman, yes ma'am.

Tell me, was there recreation in the home? Were there any games or play or recreation?

Oh, just like card games or something like that, and reading. We didn't even own a radio.

Did you all read?

Oh yeah.

What kind of things would you read?

I'd read anything I could get ahold of, I liked to read.

You always liked to read?

Yes ma'am.

When you were going through school, what kind of interests did you especially develop? What subjects did you like best, what were the things you liked best?

Oh, I liked chemistry and I liked agriculture.

Did you like sports? Did you get into sports?

Well, sports wasn't like they are now—you didn't get into sports until you were in high school.

I see.

You had to be good to do it. We only played basketball, that was all.

Let's say when the kids all got together, what would you do here in Battle Mountain as you were growing up—let's say starting to get into your teen years. What would the kids do for fun?

I don't know about the rest of them, but there was about four of us that had horses and we'd ride horseback. We were horse-minded.

And you liked that?

Yeah.

What would you do in the evenings, like a weekend evening? Would the kids get together? Would they dance? Did you dance?

In high school we did. We had dances there occasionally, yes ma'am.

Tell me, as you began to get a little bigger, what Battle Mountain was like then, compared to now. Let's take the main street, let's say in your high school years: what was the main street, the main part of Battle Mountain like, compared to today?

Well, the highway run right through it, right through Front Street—the only street that was paved, the rest were dirt streets. And

there was a hitching rack at the store that Pete—they still call it Lemaire's Store.

Oh, yes, I was in there this morning, yes.

And we'd tie our horses there.

Really?!

And chase around town and go back.
[laughs]

And how often did the train come through?

Oh, I don't know, there's quite a few trains daily. And then the NC went to Austin twice a week.

Now tell us what NC is.

Nevada Central.

Okay. What kind of a train was that?

It was a narrow gauge, and they were small.

What kind of traffic was there for that train then?

Oh, they hauled supplies to Austin, they brought cattle and sheep down here to put onto the main line. Well, just whatever. There was a dirt road from here to Austin, but it wasn't no highway.

That was the only real way to get there?

Yeah.

Were there passenger cars?

Oh yes.

Was there a lot of activity between Austin and Battle Mountain?

I think so.

I understand there was once a depot here in Battle Mountain.

Yes ma'am.

Tell me about the train travel. Do you know the time period that it ended?

For the Nevada Central? I can tell you. That was in 1935. They disbanded and they tore the rails up, starting in Austin, and brought all the iron this way, and sold it to Japan, and Japan shot it back at us in World War II.

Oh my gosh! Now why did they close it?

Oh, trucks were taking over on the highways and that. They couldn't make it, you know.

Okay, the big highways, the paved highways?

Yes ma'am.

Cheaper to do the trucking?

Yeah, and faster.

Okay. Is that when they took the depot away from Battle Mountain?

There actually was no Nevada Central depot—it would be the same depot as the Southern Pacific. You know, you got a ticket there and you went to Austin. But I mean, the track was—here was the depot, and SP on this side and the NC on this side.

I see, so you had two different lines coming.

Well, it was a narrow-gauge, the one from Austin.

I see, so there was a lot of activity on that Front Street.

Oh yeah, you bet!

Much more. Instead of the big trucks, you had the trains.

Right.

Of course you used the horse a lot. When the streets were dirt, were people still starting to get the early automobiles here?

They had automobiles.

They were starting to get them early?

Yes ma'am.

Looking at the town now, and looking back then, how many businesses were there on Front Street? It's a pretty busy place now.

Just about the same as there is now. They might have been different businesses in 'em but there were about the same buildings.

So it was a center for people to come for their shopping?

Oh, there was stores, yeah. Swackhamers had a store, Horton had a store, Lemaires had a store. Three stores, grocery stores. Well, they call them "general merchandise" stores—sold everything.

Now during the boom of the mining—and I know it's coming back now—when you were old enough to observe it, did you see the growth of the town when the mining started to get very active here?

Not 'til the last ten years here, fifteen. Well, we had a barium boom here twenty years ago, and it increased some, but they didn't employ the men that these gold mines are. So when the gold mines started—well, they started in, what, I don't think over eight years ago, really going. The new ones that we're talking about now. That's when the town built up.

Uh-huh. But before it was just like every so often it would start up and be transient, and they'd leave?

No, no, there wasn't much of that.

Wasn't much mining?

Yes, but I mean, I can't remember any transients.

Well, what I mean is transient workers who came in just to mine and then would leave. Would they go and pull in workers?

Oh, there's a certain class of that, always, I imagine.

When I mean "transients," I just mean people who are coming to work but not settling here. They'd travel in to work and then leave, where they put up these workmen's trailers.

Oh, no, no, no, they lived in the camp. There was a camp at all the mines.

Oh, so they lived not right in Battle Mountain, is that right?

Yes ma'am, right.

Do you remember, did you get involved at all in part-time work in the mines?

No ma'am.

You never did get into the mines. Tell me then, we're going to bring you through high school. What did you do after high school?

I went to work in the grocery store, Horton Mercantile.

How old were you?

Eighteen.

And what did you do?

Clerked. Well, delivery boy first, and then I clerked.

Tell me the kinds of things that were in the store that people were buying? What year was this?

Oh, 1936.

That's during the Depression, wasn't it?

Yeah, it was. They had all canned foods and fresh vegetables and bread and everything. Not as much to the extent the variety as they do now, but there was plenty of good staples. You had a good living.

Now were there three stores like that?

Yes ma'am.

Was there enough business for all three stores? Was it competitive?

Actually, it was four. There was one at what they called the Midway. It's out west of town now, south kind of.

So in the thirties, now we're talking about.

We had four stores, and we've still got 'em.

And there was enough business for all four to survive?

I guess so, they stayed.

Now, traffic came through Front Street, and then I know that they moved the highway where they detoured from Front Street, you know, [Highway] 80. Did that affect the business in the town and the traffic in the town?

I suppose some, yeah. Cars would go two or three hundred miles without a tank of gas. You know. You do have to make stops, but I imagine it changed it a little. They have to stop somewheres, though.

Now going back, you went to work in the store. How long did you work for that store?

Three-and-a-half years, and then I went to work for Engineers Limited.

Let's go back to the store. You said you delivered: In those days they delivered?

Yes ma'am.

And did you have a little car or truck?

A truck, little truck.

Would people call in their order?

Yeah, some called them, and some brought a slip in. You itemized everything that they got. You don't do like they do now on the cash register. And then we'd put the orders up and then I'd deliver 'em twice a day.

Oh, twice a day?!

Ten o'clock and two-something like that.

Oh, that was a nice convenience for people, wasn't it?

Yes, it was.

About how many people were living here in town when you were working in the store? Do you have any idea?

They said a thousand, I don't know.

Do you know what the population is now, approximate?

They say seven.

That much?

From the post office. Now, I don't know. That's just hearsay.

It looks like the town is growing.

Oh, it is. It's spread out a lot.

Yes, and spread out. So then you said you left there and you went to work. Tell me where you went to work next.

It was called Engineers Limited, and we put in these what they called "booster stations?"

What's a booster station?

Well, for the telephone, for Nevada Bell. And we built the buildings. I was on a crew that put the buildings... Well, we done the cement work on that. There were thirteen across the state, and we'd go from one of their... Leap frog up, and then they'd come back...

Now wait, let's back up a little. What did you say they did? You said leap something—I couldn't get that word.

We done the cement work, the footings, the basements and whatever they done, see.

For the different buildings?

Yes ma'am.

And throughout the whole state?

Yeah, we'd complete one here, and then we've move up twenty miles.

So you did a lot of traveling.

You'd see them on the road. They're big brick buildings on the right side. Up here east is one here. I can't remember all the names now. It don't matter anyway—McCoy, Buffalo, and Battle Mountain.

Is that when the phones were increasing in the area?

I guess, yeah.

Or maybe was it some first time?

Transcontinental lines. Hooked up all the...

Who was your boss? I mean, what was the company you were with?

Engineers Limited.

Is that a national? Or is that the one that took care of Nevada?

I don't know that. They were the construction outfit for this stuff here.

Okay. How did you learn to do that, since you had not worked like that?

Well, it was a labor gang. [laughs]

They taught you?

[laughing] Yeah.

And you learned in a hurry. Was it easy to get the job? Or was it hard?

Oh, I got on. I don't know. The grocery store couldn't compete with the wages that these paid. And I knew I was going in the [military] service, so I thought I'd better make a buck before I left.

I see, this was getting close to the wartime.

Oh yes, it was.

And so you traveled a lot?

Yeah.

Did you travel and stay overnight places?

Oh no, we had a camp at each place.

Oh a camp. With what, tents?

No, they had buildings.

Well you said a camp. Oh, they would have...

Well, they made a camp at... We worked McCoy and Buffalo for one camp.

I see, like trailers?

No, just they built these little like a tent thing, and they had a tent over it. They had the walls and the floor and that.

Do you have any pictures of any of that?

No, I don't.

Now, how many years did you do that work?

[laughs] Seven months is all, and then I got...

Did you get drafted?

Drafted, yes ma'am.

Okay. Well, go briefly through that. You got drafted, and here you're a young boy, you had always lived here. How'd that feel?

What, to go into the Service?

Yeah, to leave.

[laughs] Hell, I don't know, it was an experience.

Where did you go?

Oh, I trained in Little Rock, Arkansas. Then I went overseas to the Solomon Islands, through Georgia, Bouganville, Guadalcanal.

How did that seem to a young man who lived his life here in this little part of Nevada?

It was good to travel, but "war is hell," they say, you know.

How long were you overseas?

Three years.

Wow! Did you correspond with your family a lot?

Yes ma'am.

And what was happening back here?

I don't remember much.

Didn't matter right then.

No.

So when you came back, you came back here.

Yes.

Did you ever have any thoughts or dreams of going somewhere else? or did you always know this was home?

No, I come home.

This was home. Now tell me when you came home, were there changes in that three years during the war?

Oh, I imagine there was. There was a lot of people that I didn't know.

What brought them in, do you remember?

I don't know. I was worried about the fighting for three years, I couldn't worry about what was happening here.

So you came back. What year was that, that you came back?

December 1945.

And how was your mom?

Well, Mom was okay.

Now let's go back to the time that your dad was killed when you were a young teenager, right?

Uh-huh, fourteen.

Tell me, before he was killed. Did he talk about his job?

No.

Was he killed here in Battle Mountain?

Yes ma'am.

What was the town like that there would be a killing here?

Oh, I don't know, there was some shady character. The town was full of 'em in those

days. A lot of unemployment and that. Then they tried to connect Jack Weston with it.

Who is Jack Weston?

A noted outlaw in California and all over. It's still unsolved. They never solved it to my satisfaction.

Where was he when he was... Was he shot?

Yes ma'am.

And where was he?

Right across—you know where the Sears Store is?

Yes.

Well, he was right on there. He was down at this corner. They shot him, and he got to the alley and fell in the alley.

Oh! And they never solved it?

No. They write these stories a bunch, but they never...

Now how did your mother handle this?

Pretty hard—bad. And then she contacted a detective in...Yuba City, California. He was interested in it, trying to solve it. And Mother and him corresponded for years. She used to write him big letters and tell him stuff. He'd ask her questions and so forth.

Now, was there some kind of a pension after your father was killed to take care of your mother?

She got a little check from what they call "Nevada Industrial." It's like—that's what it was called. I don't know what they call it now.

How did she support herself and you? because you were still young.

She took in boarders.

Okay, in that same house?

No, we bought a big house up at the east end of town.

When did you buy that house?

In 1931.

Was that after he...

No, just before Dad was killed.

Just before. So that took on another big burden when they bought that house.

Right.

So who were the boarders? You were still living at home?

Yeah. We had schoolteachers, mostly. My mom took in schoolteachers, board and roomed 'em.

Were any of them your teachers?

No.

[chuckles] That's good! [laughter]

Well, I was in high school then, starting in high school.

Right, but you were living at home.

Oh yes.

And so about how many boarders at one time, do you have any idea?

Two. Two was all she could handle.

And then she'd cook for everybody?

Uh-huh.

So that was a really rough time.

Yes, it was.

Okay, now you were working, you came back from the war. What then?

I leased the Trout Creek Ranch for one year. And then I bought the old Lee Ranch, Wanda and I bought it.

The old Lee Ranch?

Yeah, Wally Lee Ranch, and we lived there for forty-four years.

Now wait a minute! Who's "we"?

Wanda and I and the kids.

Okay, you didn't tell me yet, we gotta back up.

Oh! We're married now! [chuckles]

Let's talk about when you first leased a ranch. And which ranch was that again?

Trout Creek Ranch.

Did you live there alone?

For about five months.

Was there a little house on it?

Oh yes.

And what happened after five months?

I got married.

What's your wife's name?

Wanda Bobo—she was—Wanda Bobo Chiara now.

Now, let's back up. Where did you meet your wife?

At a dance.

Where?

In Battle Mountain.

Was she in high school with you?

Oh no, she's from Fort Worth, Texas!

What was she doing here?!

She was a telegraph operator on the railroad.

And what brought her here?

Well, they sent them wherever they wanted. She went to a school, telegraph school—her and her sister—and they sent them to Battle Mountain.

So how long did she work here in Battle Mountain?

I think about six, eight months after we were married.

Okay, so now you met her. How long had she been in Battle Mountain, working, when you met her?

Oh, I don't know. She got here before I got home from the Army.

Oh, okay, so when you got home, here was this lovely woman.

Right. [chuckles]

Okay, so you met her at a dance. Where was the dance? Where did they have dances?

Sometimes the bars had 'em. They had a separate room for a dance. And then there was a dance hall.

Where?

Welp, it was there on that Second Street. It's gone now.

And was it on the first floor, second floor?

Oh no, it was downstairs. It was a movie house. They'd take the chairs out, and then they'd dance.

Oh! How often did you go dancing?

Every week. [chuckles]

Every Saturday night? And she was there? Do you remember the first time you saw her?

Yeah. I danced with her! [laughter]

So you were interested pretty quickly?

Uh-huh.

And apparently it was reciprocal. Where did you get married and when?

We got married at my mother's house, November 25, 1946.

And then did you go away for a honeymoon?

Yeah, went to Reno.

For how long?

Four days.

And then back to the ranch?

Yes ma'am.

Now tell me a little bit about your life with your wife on the ranch.

Well, we had to irrigate the alfalfa. We had a little alfalfa up there. We had no stock. I had one cow and calf, was all, and a bunch of horses. And then we only had the ranch leased a year, and Mr. Jones wouldn't give me another lease, and I had to do something, so we bought this one down here on the flat.

Now, had your wife ever done ranching before?

No ma'am. Well, she was a little bit ranch-minded. Her father and them, back...But I mean, not like out here.

How did Wanda take to that life?

Good, real good.

Did she like it?

Yeah.

And so then the lease went up and you bought this other ranch?

This one, yes ma'am.

And tell me again the name of it.

The old Wally Lee Ranch.

When did your family start arriving, your children?

Louis was born the next August [August 17, 1947]. Then Joe Fay [Josephine Fay], was born in 1953 [November 28, 1953].

Oh, that's nice. So they were quite a few years apart.

Six years, yes ma'am.

And tell me a little more about life at the ranch, after you had the two children.

Well we had cattle, and raised hay and had a calf crop. We didn't have enough to make a livin', so I had to go to work.

And where did you go?

Oh, I worked at Copper Canyon, and Natomas, and the barium mine.

Alright, let's go back to the first one. What kind of work at these mines did you do?

On Natomas I worked on a gold dredge. Natomas was first.

Since many people listening to this or reading it won't know, what does that mean when you

say you "worked on a gold dredge," what does that mean?

It's a big boat that digs the dirt out, brings it up into the boat, and it's washed and run through tables and traps and that, and they trap the gold.

So you ran the equipment?

No, I was an oiler. Each shift had a winchman and three oilers.

What does an "oiler" mean?

Well, you worked in either the head, or the middle, or the stern of this boat.

Of this boat?

I'm losing you, aren't I? [laughs]

Yes, you are! That's why I'm [asking you to explain]. Other people who don't know mining won't know. Did you say a "boat"?

They call it a boat.

What was it?

Just a big iron dredge. It's actually a dredge.

Okay, when you said you worked on the oil, what does that mean?

Well, we had to oil it. We had a certain amount of oiling to do.

In other words, you kept the equipment in good condition?

Oh yes! Yes ma'am.

Okay, that's language a layman can understand. So now, you worked on that, and how long did you work at Natomas?

'til it closed down. The stackers broke on the boat—they collapsed—and no one was hurt, but it was a serious mess. So they decided to close the boat down, rather than try to repair it. So then they dismantled the boat. Since everybody was looking for work, why we knew it was going to be done, so I went to work at Copper Canyon.

Okay, did you do the same kind?

No, I worked in the power plant, I run the electrical.

The power?

The generators. We had generators up there.

How did you know how to do all these things?

You learn it. You have to learn it, quick!

Now, what were your hours, first at Natomas, and then at Copper Canyon? What hours did you work?

Well, you worked an eight-hour shift. See, they had three shifts on the boat: day, swing, and graveyard, and you rotated those shifts.

So while you were doing that, what was happening back at the ranch?

[laughs] It had to run itself! Wanda took care of it. I done what I could.

Weekends?

Weekends. And when I worked swing and graveyard, I had off daylight hours at home.

When your kids were getting bigger, did they help?

Oh yeah, they always have. They had cattle of their own and everything.

Good. So then from Copper Canyon, where did you go then?

I went down to Dresser here in Battle Mountain, a barium mill.

At the barium plant, what kind of work did you do there?

Well, we run the mill, and bagged it, bagged the ore. You just done everything.

Now for those who don't know, and I certainly don't know, how did they get the barium out of the ground?

Oh, it's mined up here at Graystone and brought to town.

Then they brought it to the mill?

And it's ground and pulverized and cleaned and bagged.

I read where when barium started to come over from China, it interfered with the barium mines here, because you couldn't compete with their prices. Is that what happened?

Yes ma'am. And it's when most of the mines closed down.

Oh, that's a shame. So how long did you work there?

Oh, I can't remember exactly. I think about three years.

Then were you able to just work on the ranch, or did you have to still take jobs?

No, then I went to the barium mine down here at Mountain Springs. Worked in the mine then.

Oh! Tell me what that's like.

Well, you load rounds and blast and dynamite. And they had shovels and loaders to load trucks, and you drove truck and you run it through the mill.

Just everything?

You done everything, just a flunkie.

And that was a barium mine too?

Yes ma'am.

Before it closed?

Uh-huh.

So then again, let's go back to the ran about your children through these years, by now were they school age?

Yes ma'am. There was a schoolbus. We hauled them to the highway, and then they rode the bus to town, for school. And then we'd pick 'em up at night.

And Wanda would be busy on the ranch?

Uh-huh.

Was she a good rancher?

Oh, she worked too! She had to get a job.

Oh my goodness! What did she do?

She was the cook manager at the hospital here for twenty-two years.

Oh my gosh! You're both very energetic people!

It was either that or starve!

Well, some people starve! Now tell me, I want to know about the hospital.

Let's see, Wanda worked a little bit at the old hospital. That was over on Second Street. It's a complex now. Dick Marvel owns it, or his son.

Oh, I'm interviewing him tomorrow.

Then they moved it over to the one where it is now. And I think that's twenty-five years old. Mrs. Lancaster was the manager. And Wanda worked there 'til she retired.

Oh my! Full-time?

Yeah!

So you were a very busy family! Your children had to be pretty independent and help a lot, right?

Yes ma'am.

Tell me a little bit about your son. Tell me a little bit about him as a person and how his life has evolved.

Well he worked on the ranches, different ranches in the summer. He got hurt working for Henry Filippini, over at Carrico Lake Ranch. A horse fell with him.

And what happened to him?

He had a brain injury. Well, he was in a coma, and he was in the hospital in intensive care for about a week or so, and then we got him out. It was not as bad as it could have been. He had internal bleeding and that.

Did he recuperate okay?

Oh yes, he's good now.

It must have been traumatic for all of you.

Yes, it was. Right.

What did he do when he got out of school?

Then he went to school in Ontario, Oregon—Treasure Valley Community College. He went to college up there, two-year college.

What made him go there?

Oh, some of his friends were going and he wanted to go with 'em.

What were his interests? What was he thinking of doing with his life?

Well, I don't know. He got into police work. He's in police work up there.

Oh, he lives up there, he stayed there?

Yes ma'am. Oh yes, that's his home.

And do you see him?

Oh yes, occasionally.

Come up and back?

Yeah.

Is he married with children?

Oh yes, he's been married. He's got three boys and a daughter.

Oh boy, a big family!

Our granddaughter is twenty-two. The boys are younger.

And they're doing fine?

Oh yeah.

Now what about Joe Fay?

Joe Fay. Oh, she worked a lot off and on at the county building in the Assessor's Office, and different ones. And now she's in with the judge. She's a clerk for the judge here.

Oh, that's a good job.

I guess.

Is she married?

Yeah.

Does she have children?

We have one grandson, she has one boy.

And so she stayed here?

She lives here, yeah.

And your son went far off. And then I want to go back now. You were working at the second barium mine. What did you do after that? Were you able to ever just ranch?

Oh, let's see, after the barium mine, yeah, I retired from the mines, and then I worked the ranch full-time.

In that kind of work were there unions where you at least got some retirement or pensions?

Oh yeah, we had retirement through Social Security, and then *they* had a plan.

Oh good. And the same with Wanda? Did the hospital have a good plan?

She got one from the ER.

Did you have health care through that? Did you have a health insurance plan?

Yeah, there was insurance we had to buy.

I mean, did she get health insurance with her job?

I think it was held out of her wages, I think, if I remember right. You know what I mean, she paid her share.

Yeah, but I mean it was a health plan where it wasn't too...

Yes, they had it.

How was the hospital and health care here in the early...

Oh, I think it was good.

I know people from Austin have to either go to Battle Mountain or Fallon, because there's no health care or hospitals, but how is the health care here now, pretty good?

Right now I don't know. They're playing it down. They say that they Can't do this and they can't do that.

Do you have doctors?

Yes, there's doctors here—two. But for some reason the facilities, they can't deliver babies.

They can't deliver babies at the hospital?!

That's what they say. Looks good to me.

Too crowded?

[expressing disgust] Awww, I don't know. Just politics, that's what it is, They say the building is bad now. Takes a lot of money to buy these new buildings and new jail and all this stuff they want.

A lot of money, yes.

And when these mines are gone, the tax base is going to be altogether different,

Yes. I know Nevada has one of the most favorable-to-the-citizen tax laws when compared to most other states. What are the taxes here? Do you pay state tax?

We pay property taxes.

You don't pay state tax?

Oh, there's a lot of state taxes that are written.

I mean state income tax like we do in California.

No, no income tax in Nevada.

Just the federal income tax, right?

Right.

What is the level of property tax here, what percentage?

I think it's \$3.80 a hundred now, assessed valuation.

Assessed valuation. Has it gone up?

Oh, I think it's pretty stable, lately, here.

Because I know people are leaving California to move here because of your favorable tax structure.

See, they have a limit of five dollars. If it gets to that, then they gotta do something else—they gotta figure something else out.

You've lived here, of course, all of your life. What I want to ask you about now is, through those years when you've had to work so hard to support your family, and your ranch didn't pay off, what are some of the changes in Battle Mountain—some for better and some for worse—that you have seen, that you've been satisfied with or dissatisfied with in this city?

Well, you know, the change now is high-speed living. You know, we got fast cars, and they gotta hurry up. They can't shop in Battle Mountain, they want to go to Elko. Things like that. And you're going all over. Used to be an all-day trip to go to Elko or Winnemucca, and then you'd have flat tires and everything—all kinds of problems. Now, you don't think nuthin' about it—you don't even plan it, you just get in your car and go. To Reno the same

way—you just travel all over. And everything is fast-paced now, I think. Fast food! They've got everything! [laughter] But I don't know if it's for the better or not. I like the old times myself but I'm not knocking down progress—we gotta have that, you know.

But a way of life that's passing by?

Right. Oh yes, it is. Yeah, you know, we're restricted a lot on the ranches with the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Life is just plumb different now. The miners are the same way—they gotta reclaim the mine when they're done. It's too much jurisdiction from up above.

Uh-huh. Now, when this new mining in the last decade started with the chemicals, getting more gold and all these big, big companies, these big companies are not from this region, right?

No.

They're from other areas?

Yes.

What has changed in the last ten years when these mines have opened? Do these owners come and live here? Do they send people from out of.

They're companies.

Do they send people to come?

Oh yeah. They sent some of those employees here.

Do they live here?

Oh yes.

They're the ones coming here?

Yes ma'am.

Do they hire a lot of local people in these mines?

I think they do what they can, but there's quite a bit of transient miners.

Who come to work and then go home?

Yeah.

I never came to Battle Mountain until this year—but I can see a lot of bustling activity. I stay at the Holiday Inn Express, and there's a lot of workers who stay there, so it looks like a lot of work. Do these people who own the mines who stay, do they integrate with the community? or do they live a separate life?

Oh no, they integrate.

They join in?

The big shots, you might call them. There's no one individual owns this. It's companies that own it, and they're from *Canada*, most of 'em.

But the people they send here to live here to run it, do they buy homes and settle?

Yeah, some of them do.

How has it changed in the ten years since all of that started?

Echo Bay has a big place out here. There must be over two hundred trailers. I'm just guessing, now, don't quote me on this stuff.

They had a man camp they set up first for the single men. And that's quite an area out there that's changed. Evidently some of the miners are moving—well, they've cut the forces, I hear, out to the mine—because they're selling lots out there at Echo Bay.

Do they contribute to the added expenses of the community?

Oh yeah, they pay taxes and everything.

Because the schools...

They have to have 'em, sure. Oh yeah, they're paying their share. It's fine now, but when they all close, then what are we going to do if we're in debt for a five-million-dollar hospital or a ten-million-dollar jail? Then it's going to fall back to the old die-hards that can't get away from here, like myself.

Yeah. Are people like you, who've lived here a long time, are any of them leaving, or do most of them stay?

No, I think most of us are staying. Well, you got grass roots here, you own a home—why go?

That's right. Are the young people—I like to ask that, because I see you have one son left, one girl who's here—is that generation, are they settling here, or are they leaving?

Some are. And then some are moving, yes ma'am. I don't know too much about it, because I'm not associated with the schools any more.

I mean, when they get to be young adults, you know.

Some are staying, some are getting homes and everything here. And then there's others that move on and try something somewhere else. Which is good—I think they should check around and see.

But I do see so many who do come back to their home.

Right. I don't know if there's too many people moved in here strictly for retirement—you know, from somewhere else. There's some, I'm sure. You hear of somebody, and he says, "Oh I come up here, I'm going to retire here." You know, that. And us retirees contribute a little bit. You know, it's small, because we don't have the money, we don't have the income that these others do.

Now, when the county seat was moved here from Austin—and I've just been interviewing in Austin, and I've read a lot about it. Of course I work under the Board of Commissioners, and I know there was a vote of the people—they tried it two or three times, and then the vote finally brought it here. Just from your own personal knowledge, can you tell me anything about that period when they were going to have the vote? I'm sure the people here wanted it moved here. Can you tell me anything about the problems when it was in Austin?

Well, the only problem was there was more people here, and they had to go to Austin to transact their business. And then of course when the vote come, there's a lot more people here to pass the measure, and that's how they moved it.

How did that affect Battle Mountain? Bring in a lot of people?

Oh, give 'em maybe thirty more employees or something, you know. A lot of those people

wouldn't move from Austin down here to work.

No, I know, I talked to them in the interviews.

Like the Assessor and the Treasurer and some of them that are elected. They wouldn't move. They just retired or quit or something. But there's like my daughter here now—they're all just employed. There's a bunch of 'em.

So it created new jobs here?

Yeah, there's some different jobs, right.

And also, did it bring more people here when they had to come to do their business? Did they come and stay overnight?

Oh, I don't know that. Really, I couldn't help you on that, I don't know.

I know I stay out at Holiday Inn, and I see people who come and they have to stay overnight, to attend these early commissioner meetings, and so it probably brings a little more business here?

Yeah, I imagine some of the distant ranchers have to come here for legal matters, plus also the BLM is here, the big BLM office.

Was that moved here?

No, it started here in 1947, 1948—I don't know, in here somewhere.

Was there a lot of controversy? Did you know people in Austin—because I know there was such strong feelings, there still are. Did you know anyone there personally?

Oh yeah, I knew a lot of the oldtimers. I don't know too many of the younger ones.

The oldtimers. So was that pretty hard for them? Or did they understand?

No, it was hard for them, I think. They didn't want to give up. You can't blame 'em, can you?

Oh no! Especially because the town doesn't have much.

I can see their point.

Oh yeah, it must have been very hard. I read in the earlier days that a lot of people from Battle Mountain would go to Austin on Fourth of July.

Oh yes.

And they'd come up here, and there'd be races. Is there still that interaction with Austin?

Oh, I think to a certain degree.

Do people here go down there for some festivities?

Yes ma'am. I think it's more the oldtimers that know people down there, and that.

Did you used to go down there?

Oh yeah!

Tell me about that.

Oh, you'd make trips down there when you filed your work on claims, proof of labors on your mine claims and that. Any legal matters, if you couldn't do it through the mail, you had to go up there.

But I mean, would you go on the Fourth of July? would you go for celebrations?

Oh, occasionally, yeah, I have been up there to some.

Do you remember what that celebration was like? because I read a lot about Fourth of July.

Oh they had parades and stuff and like that, and contests. It was a regular mine-town deal: drilling and such as that, you know.

When you said they had to go for "proof of labor for the mine Claims"...

Well, you file a proof of labor to show that you've done your work on your mine claims.

Tell me the process of establishing a mine claim. Did you ever have any?

Oh yes ma'am, I've had 'em.

Give me, from your experience, every step, because people who don't live near mining have no idea what it means to establish a mine claim. So tell me what you did to establish it, through your own process.

You file a location notice. You locate the ground with a notice at a spot, put a location notice—monument—up.

Alright, what kind of land is that, that you're allowed to do that on?

Well, any you want. The load claims are twenty acre 600 feet by 1,500 feet is a claim.

Is this state land?

Yes ma'am. Well, no, most of it is federal. This is federal land. There's not much state land here.

Okay, federal land. Then they tell you where that federal land is that you can claim?

You have to establish it. It's put on a big map. You find a corner somewhere. Some I had over here was seven miles away from a corner. So I had to have it surveyed from there and measured. And then I'm set up. Then you get a map, you make a map and send it in, and all this stuff. Then every year, you do your location work.

Now what is location work?

A hundred dollars' worth of work per claim.

Okay, now tell me what the work is, for people that don't know mines.

You can either do it by hand, or most of us now use some kind of a little machine.

Going into the ground to see if you find anything?

You dig trenches or drill. You can drill. But now it's getting tough. The government's telling you what to do and what not to do and how you have to reclaim it and all that.

So you just got it free?

That land that you took. Now they're going to charge us two hundred dollars a claim, per year, and you don't have to go out and do any assessment work. But.

Now, could you use that land for anything else, or was that only for mining?

That's supposed to be for mining. Of course the cattle can graze on it if you haven't disturbed it that much.

So when you claimed a place was it because you thought maybe there was stuff under it?

Yeah, your location notice, location monument, should be on a ledge of ore. Now they make what they call—these big ones like Echo Bay and all them—what they call “blanket locations.” They just start locating.

Free, without paying?

Oh yeah, they have the money. But then, see the county gets a little out of it—filing fees and that.

But they have a claim on it, but they don't own the land?

No, they don't own it.

I see, just to work...

Work claim, right.

To see if you can find mines. Then I read where big companies might buy those claims from people.

Right. Yes ma'am, they do.

So when they buy the claims, they pay you for your claim?

Yes.

Does any of that go back to the federal government?

You pay income taxes on it.

Right, but they can just buy the claim from you, and then they have that claim?

They own it.

And did you ever find anything in your mine claims?

I sold some to Echo Bay.

But did you ever find ore or anything?

No, but *they* found it, if there was any. I don't know, once they sell em, I don't know nothin' about it.

So then you go down once a year to prove that you've done work on it, is that it?

You go and *do* work on the claims.

Right, but you said then you go to file a proof of labor.

Well, you used to go to Austin—now we do it here.

Right, you show proof.

There's a form you can buy. You'll get more of that from some of these miners.

Well, but I just want to know individual, because the big companies are different.

Well, it's coming to a halt. Now they don't want us to own this land—or to *use* it even.

Now, is it just for Nevadans who can make a claim?

Well, no, I think you can claim in these other states.

I mean, did people come, prospectors come? Did they make claims too? Like if a prospector came, they could not live here, but make claims too?

I think so, yeah. You might have to establish residence, I don't know. I've just done it here in Nevada. I only had the two sets of claims.

So what year did you have these mine claims? When did you do that?

Oh, I took 'em out about 1969, I think, and done the assessment work ever since on 'em. That's your annual work that you do to hold the claims. And then you file that. If you think I didn't do the work, you go up to the county seat and here's my proof of labor.

Now why did they say you had to do that?

If you want to hold the claims. If you don't want 'em, you just let em go, and somebody else can stake 'em.

I see, because they want the ore or whatever's in the ground to be mined, to encourage mining?

Yes ma'am.

Encourage the mining.

See, like I say, now they prospect with airplanes and radar—I don't know what—all....

Oh, I see, to determine where it might be.

Where the ore bodies are. And they'll find an ore body that's twelve miles long or something like that.

I see. Now, these companies from out of town who don't live here they're allowed to do that?

They're allowed to buy your claims? They don't live here.

Yeah.

When your folks first came, did they homestead? Was there homesteading here? Did they get homesteading land?

Oh yeah, there was homestead.

Yeah, because all of the whole West...

This ranch I bought was homesteaded.

Was first homesteaded?

Yes ma'am.

Because I know most of the West, where they encouraged...But then you had to develop water and build your house on it.

Right, you had to...

Were both your grandparents homesteaders, on both sides, the first ones?

Well I don't really know how they got it. Grandma Chiara had what they called the Chiara Ranch, right out here, But Grandpa leased railroad ground for the little ranch he had. And then of course when he quit leasing it, why, it was anybody's. They give you time to remove any improvements if you want—fences or a house or something.

And of course it was tough on those early pioneers: no water, no irrigation yet. Let's go back to the war years, because I know that the government needed a lot of our supplies for the war. Tell me how that affected the economy here in Battle Mountain.

Well, it changed. The gold mines couldn't get any priorities on materials or gas or anything. They just couldn't buy it. Everything was strategic minerals—metals and minerals. So that closed the gold mines all down.

Oh my! What about the railroad during that time? What did Battle Mountain have to do to turn over to the government to help with the war effort? Were there any metals or minerals or...

You were allowed five tires and wheels on a vehicle. If you had more than that, you had to turn 'em in. If you had a spare set—if you were honest—you were supposed to turn 'em in. I had two spare tires on my car when I left, and my mother give one away—turned it in to the government, no reimbursement.

Oh, really? You had to do that? No payment? No reimbursement?

She didn't get anything! I don't know if the rest did. That way, they listed *all* trucks that anybody owned. I don't think they ever did—I wouldn't call it "confiscate" 'em, but *take* 'em. They want to use em. They didn't have any...The United States was in no shape to fight a war in 1941. It's a wonder we didn't get whipped, because we were trying to fight Germany, and then they hit us from the Pacific, and it was *tough*, boy!

I know we all had gas rationing.

Well, you had gas rationing, food rationing, meat, sugar—all kinds of stuff was rationed here. And I think—I wasn't here—but I imagine it was hard to get things in here, because the Army used the railroad so much. They didn't have these big trucks in those days.

Uh-huh, and then that stopped the truck freighting a lot.

Yeah.

Was there a shortage of supplies here?

They said there was.

You were away, fighting the war.

I was gone, yeah.

How long did it take after the war to bring it back to the state it was, as far as trucks and tires and oil? A few years?

Oh, I don't know, there was a couple of... Let's see, I think it was about 1948 before they started making vehicles again. They didn't even make vehicles and sell 'em, during the forties. They was all converted to the war effort.

So that really affected the community.

Yeah. Well, it hurt everybody.

Did you have a car or truck when you left for the military? Did anyone take it, or your tires, for the war effort?

Yeah, I left it with my mother. I still had it. It was a car. I had a car in those days.

Were you able to buy new tires for it when you came back?

Well they were still good! [laughter] It hadn't been run much! No, it was alright. Yeah, things come back pretty quick. Oh, I don't know. Like I say, I got home in 1945, and I got a pickup in 1948. But you couldn't

buy one in 1946 or 1947. You had to put your name in the book.

I heard when the copper mining was going on, that the government bought the copper. Was that for the war? The copper mining for the government?

I don't know what they done with it. They bought up a lot of copper.

Was that during the war?

Probably, yes.

Was there, in your time of ranching, when water was important, was there a problem with droughts?

Oh yes ma'am.

And what did you do?

You just bought hay.

Oh! instead of raising your own?

You couldn't raise any if you didn't have water.

And where did you buy the hay? Who had water to raise it?

Oh, Fallon, Lovelock—those irrigated areas. See, that was before the wells and pumps come into this country.

What did you use for water? How did you get your water on your ranch?

Oh, we had domestic water and stock water and that. We weren't worried about that. It was for irrigation [that we were worried about].

And so did you have to depend on the rains for your main watering?

Yeah, the cattle went on the range, and then the water from the range too, from the cricks [creeks].

In other words, was it only from the rain? or did the wells dry up? or what?

No, no, the wells were pretty static. They stayed the same. We just irrigated with what crick water you could get, you know. And we had water right on Reese River, too, on the ranch.

How did you get the water from the creek to your animals? What was the process of the irrigation? Ditches?

Oh, ditches, yes ma'am. It was flood irrigated.

You'd dig the ditches near the water, or how'd you do that?

Well, wherever the water was, you take it to the field through ditches.

Okay, through ditches. You'd have to dig ditches through your fields?

Yes ma'am.

And it would flow there, if there was water.

Right.

Were there any severe storms that affected your animals?

We had a flood in 1962.

And how did that affect your ranch and your animals?

We had to move our animals up on high ground. We had a stack of loose hay out in the field. We couldn't get to it. We had to buy hay to feed the animals.

Did you lose any of your animals?

Oh yeah, you lose animals all the time, always. But the river was a mile wide where you go to Austin. You've been that way?

Uh-huh.

When you cross the Reese River bridge out here, it was a mile wide there, going over the highway for a mile. Flooded Battle Mountain.

Oh my gosh!

You never heard of the flood?

Well, I've heard of it, but each person is affected a different way.

Oh, it went into a lot of houses in Battle Mountain. My mother's house had water in it. We had to move those people out. They had to go and shut the power off at every house.

How long did it rain, that it created so much...

It didn't rain.

What made it rise?

Well it *did* down... Yeah, there was about a foot of snow or better in Upper Reese River, on those dry farms. And the ground was frozen, and of course it couldn't go in the ground when it started, and then it rained up there. And when that river started, boy, I'll tell you, it was huge.

Oh my! Anyone die in that flood?

We lost one, an electrician, a fellow by the name of Casey. He was working for the power company and he got electrocuted.

Oh, for goodness sakes!

I don't think we lost anybody through water, through flooding.

Now what about the storms? I read in a real, really early Rancher the storm was so bad, and they couldn't reach their cattle, which was at, I guess, winter grazing. And there weren't planes in those days to drop hay, and they all froze. In your lifetime, did you know of any terrible storm that created that much damage for the ranchers?

Oh, you'd get these winter storms, they put a lot of snow on the ground—like last winter here. And that has a bad affect on the cattle—the cold and you lose baby calves.

Now when you had your ranches, did you sell your cattle for beef?

Yes ma'am. Just beef cattle, that's all we had.

Where and how did you sell them?

The buyers would come out to the ranch. Sometimes we would take them to an auction ring—one in Fallon, one in Twin Falls.

I've been to the one in Fallon.

You have to haul em yourself.

In those great big trucks. Now, when they would come, what would they do? go around the whole

area and knew where the ranches were, when they went around to buy cattle?

Oh, yeah, these buyers know everybody and everything, and their cattle.

Did they have the great big, big trucks that they took them away in?

No, they'd hire trucks to haul them.

After they bought it?

After they bought it, yeah.

Did you have any sheep?

No ma'am.

No sheep. Cattle and...

Pigs. We did raise pigs once in a while.

Okay, did you sell them in the same way?

Uh-huh, and we'd butcher 'em, butcher the pigs and sell them.

Oh, to markets local?

Right.

Did you butcher them yourself?

Yes ma'am. You're restricted now, through the Department of Agriculture on what you can sell and that. You can't even sell eggs, did you know that?

I didn't know eggs. But I can see the meat, because a lot of people have gotten tainted meat and gotten really sick.

Yeah. No, the best way is just sell 'em live weight to the buyers. And then *he* puts 'em on feed somewheres or sells them to a buyer on feed. Then they feed and fatten them and put them in a slaughterhouse and that's the circle then.

There's been so much trouble lately with meat that's been tainted. What's the problem with eggs?

Oh, I don't know, they just don't want you to sell eggs. You know, they have to be candled and all that stuff I guess, and classed and graded. We used to sell eggs to Swackhamer's, the store here. But they weren't strict in those days, you know, like they are now. They were fresh eggs—gee, we'd bring 'em in every day, or every two or three, couple days. And they'd mark 'em, they'd know they were fresh and not...Cold storage.

Uh-huh, well maybe some people weren't like you were.

Well, they liked 'em.

No, I mean maybe some people selling eggs weren't selling the kind of eggs the way you sold.

That might be.

You always get some who hurt it for others. You know, just like some who will keep in a store stuff that's tainted, and they want to sell it and they're not as thoughtful. They hurt the others.

Right, that's true.

Sure. What I want to ask you now is, if you can tell me anything about the Lander County area or Battle Mountain that I may have forgotten

to ask you about your life here—maybe what brought you to this house.

Well, when we sold the ranch, we were going to retire in Battle Mountain, so we bought this. We didn't want to live in the town, so we moved out here.

What year was that?

Let's see, what's today? It must have been 1988, I think. We've been here five years.

And who did you sell your ranch to?

We just sold it the other day!

Oh, you mean you've had it all that time?

We've had it all this time, yeah.

Couldn't sell it?

No.

Did you keep it up? Did you go over there?

Yeah. We sold the cattle in 1989, so that made it a lot different. We just had to work the hay then. And then we'd sell the pasture and the hay. We leased it a couple years to one boy.

Now was this house here when you bought it?

Yes ma'am.

Because this is like a ranch, you're rural.

Right.

Was the house just like it is now?

Well, except for the inside furniture.

Was this in your other house? the furniture in your other house?

Yes ma'am.

Was your other house as big as this? This is a nice big house.

No, it was a little one. Just four rooms is all.

It must have been really nice to move into this spacious place.

Welt, I thought so, it'd be good for Wanda to have a nice home, you know.

Do your kids come here?

Oh yeah, sure.

Do they come and stay sometimes?

No, they don't stay overnight. Well, Louie does, but Joe Fay just comes and eats with us and that, and then goes home. We go out there and see 'em.

And you're close to town, and yet you're out where it's rural.

Right.

Did you know any of your neighbors in this area when you moved here?

No, not too many. The man across the street, and then Ben Clark up here. We didn't buy it from Ben, but Ben had the land originally. They 'bout the only one, goes through here. It's some farther away. You don't fraternize like you do

in a town, really. Our friends from town come out and see us, or we go in there.

So what is your life like now? Well, since you moved here, tell me what your life is like. Did you miss all the hard work, or were you happy to have an easier life and relax more?

Well, I'll tell you what, there's a lot of hard work associated with this place! The lawns, the trees, the wet and the caring for the lawn.

Oh, you take care of it all?

Oh, absolutely, all this stuff, Wanda and I do. And then we raise a little garden. When we first moved here, we had two steer calves that we fed and butchered for ourselves. Now we only have two horses.

Do you ride them?

Oh yes.

Does Wanda ride?

No, Wanda doesn't, but my grandson does, and Joe Fay.

Oh, how nice! That's wonderful. So is that your favorite recreation?

That's our pastime, that and fishing. [chuckles] If I get a chance, I go.

Did you always go fishing?

Oh yeah. Well, you know, when you're on a ranch, you don't have time to do anything but work.

So are you taking time now to enjoy your life a little bit?

Oh yeah, they say we're retired. I don't know, you're just plain tired, I think, not retired.

So then besides that and the house, you said you go into town every Friday?

Oh, I go every day to get the mail at the post office.

Oh, you don't get mail delivery?

There's some, but we didn't get it.

I see, so you go into the post office for mail?

Uh-huh, and then if I have to shop. Wanda shops on Friday. We go see our friends and visit.

Has she gone back home to visit her family?

Oh yes, she goes every year to Texas.

By herself?

Yeah.

Do you ever go?

Oh, I've been there three or four times, it always seemed like I was tied down. It worked a hardship, and it's a hardship on Wanda too. Her sister goes with her a lot, Lavada Shaw. But last year Lavada had open-heart surgery and she couldn't go. And then Grandma died just last fall, and Wanda went back alone.

She seems to have fit into a happy life here.

Oh, right.

That's nice. So that you both seem to be a good couple together.

Well, we get along—forty...Have to stop and figure, forty-six years, I think.

What are your plans now that you're retired and living here? Do you plan to go anywhere, or to just enjoy your life in a more leisurely way?

That's right. We're not much travelers, you know. Wanda doesn't like to go t'all. I went to see some friends the other day and she didn't go with me, she wouldn't go.

Uh-huh, you love your home and your place.

Uh-huh, she likes it here.

What do you see as a prediction for Battle Mountain, let's say, in the next ten years?

Well, I doubt if I'll be here. [chuckles]

What do you think it's going to be like here?

Oh, I think they'll be some changes, probably, if the mines close. There's a big "if" in that. That controls a lot here. There'll be a lot of people leave—they gotta go where there's work.

Yes, the younger people.

That will change things—the businesses and everything. But it's a rough go to try to pick up and go somewhere. You don't know if you're going to get a job when you get there. That's how we end up with these people that are homeless.

Uh-huh, they go thinking they'll find work.

They go, and they don't get work, and then they're...Because I talked to some people one day, and I said, "How in the hell do people get

homeless?” They had to have a home to start with, somewheres. They lived somewheres. You don’t live in a cardboard box all your life. And then they say that they go tramping off somewhere and their car breaks down.

Yeah, they’ve lost a job.

And they haven’t got any money, and so then they just...

Yeah, these places close down, and then it’s tough.

And there’s a lot of drinking now, and this dope and that. And it just scares you, you know.

Tell me about Battle Mountain. I was kind of impressed here, and in Austin, that people can still feel pretty safe—they can leave some doors open. Some tell me they leave their keys in the car That’s not common in this country. Has this town changed as far as.

Oh yeah, there’s a lot more robbery and that stuff going on. Well, there’s more people—the more people you get, the more of that you’re going to have.

But I see it less danger—I don’t see bars on windows, like you see...

No. But I mean, years ago, you never locked anything—thirty years ago. But now you do, you do. It won’t keep the thief out, but you’ll know he’s been there when you see it.

One of the things that I saw here that I think deters crime is you have an awful lot of sheriffs driving all around, so it would deter.

Right, patrol cars.

Yeah, a lot of patrolling. Do the gambling places, where they give free liquor, create any drunks on the street?

Oh, I suppose. They tell me in these bigger places that when you go in there to gamble that they’ll bring you a drink.

Yeah, they do.

It’d affect anybody if he drinks enough of it, you know. But I don’t get around to the bars and the gambling and that, so I don’t know what what’s going on there, really. I kind of stay shy of them places.

You go in the afternoon?

Well, I go to town, but I don’t go in the bars. No, I go play cribbage with John Williams, and I play with Lisa Andre.

Do you? Do you play cribbage with John Williams? I’m interviewing him this afternoon. That’s nice.

Ask him if he knows anything about cribbage.

About cribbage? [laughter]

He’ll wanna play with you. See the trophy I won in Austin?

Oh! Oh, so you’re a champion cribbage player?

Well, I was there that day. [chuckles]

Is that right? So you’ve been playing cribbage for a long time?

Not a long time, but I like it, and I really love the game.

I never played it, so I don't know a thing about it.

It's a great game.

Do you play cribbage with Wanda?

She won't learn. I tried to bribe her by teaching her crib, and I'd play Chinese checkers with her.

Oh, that's nice.

But she finally even quit that. She reads a lot. Wanda reads a lot, she reads all the time.

That's nice. Now, who else besides John? Do you have other friends you play cribbage with?

Sam McMullen. We have cribbage tournaments here.

Oh that's wonderful! That keeps your mind sharp.

There's a bunch. I think the biggest we had was thirteen or fifteen.

It sounds like a very pleasant pastime.

It is. It's a lot of fun. The last two we've had was at the Senior Center.

Uh-huh. Do you go down to the Senior Center where Frances Williams is the director?

Well, you know, there's not too many places you can do it.

Do you and Wanda go there for lunch?

Not their daily lunch. It doesn't work in with our scheduled, but we do go—Frances

wants us to come at Christmas and these special dinners, you know—we try to get to them. But we eat breakfast about eight, between eight and nine, depending, and then we don't eat again until two o'clock, or three sometimes. The only way we could eat there is not eat breakfast. And we take pills—I take pills—that I have to eat food with. And we're on a diet now.

Everybody is! Now is there anything else... You can even go back, if you've thought of something about your grandparents or your parents, or any part of your life that we didn't cover in this interview, that you might want to add before we end it.

Oh, I can't remember too much. My granddad was quite an old gentleman. He rode horses. He lost a hand, he cut a hand off...

Now which grandpa was this?

Estes, Grandpa Estes.

What happened?

He fell into a buzz saw, one of these big saws you saw wood with.

[gasps] Oh no!

And cut it right off at the wrist. But he rode with us. We went up and done the assessment work once at Gray Eagle. We were just kids. Grandpa was the financier. He got the hundred dollars for doing the work. See, what you could do in those days, you could... Like if I had had the money, I'd send somebody out there and say, "Now, you do four hundred dollars' worth of work on those claims, and I'll give you four hundred dollars."

Oh, I see, yeah.

And that II keep the ball a' rollin' the money.

I see.

But I couldn't afford it, so I'd have to take my tractor out and do it. But anyhow, Grandpa would ride the horse. We'd have to saddle the horse and help him on. He had a big belly—he was fat.

Any pictures of him?

Oh, I'd have to look for 'em, I don't have 'em right now. We've got a *lot* of pictures, really.

Yeah, because I'd want to see some.

He was quite and old codger. We'd do the cookin'—Eddy King and

Who's Eddy King?

Well, he was a good friend of mine. He was killed in the [military] service in World War II.

Where would you do the cooking with him?

We went up to old Corral Canyon, where Grandpa's ranch originally...

I see, and you'd bring your friend?

Well, we'd take the horses up, Eddy and I, and then Uncle Harvey would bring Grandpa up—and all the groceries and stuff. And we had to ride seven miles a-horseback to Gray Eagle, to work in this tunnel. We made a tunnel ten foot long by six by four, I think it

was. There's supposed to be a certain amount of dirt moved.

Oh, when you worked for that mine?

Yeah. And we each got ten dollars and our groceries, and Grandpa got eighty!

He got eighty?!

Well, he was the boss, you know. [laughs]

Did he hire you guys?

Yes, we done the work for him.

Oh, I see.

It was quite a contract. [laughs] It was a lot of fun. We were just eighteen-year-old kids then.

Uh-huh, that sounds great.

I mean, anytime a grandfather can get along with two eighteen-year-olds, it's pretty good, isn't it?

Must be pretty good. I hope you can find a picture of him. I think it'd be important to have.

Oh, I've a snapshot, just little snapshots.

That's okay. Anything else that you want to share before we close the interview, that we might not have covered?

I don't know, I was trying to think about the change between Austin and here. I can't see much different. You know, it affected Austin and it affected Battle Mountain both—when they moved the courthouse, I'm talkin' about. But I think Austin has accepted it to

a certain degree. Now there's still gonna be bitterness and rivalry, as ever, but I'm sure it'll work out—I hope, anyway.

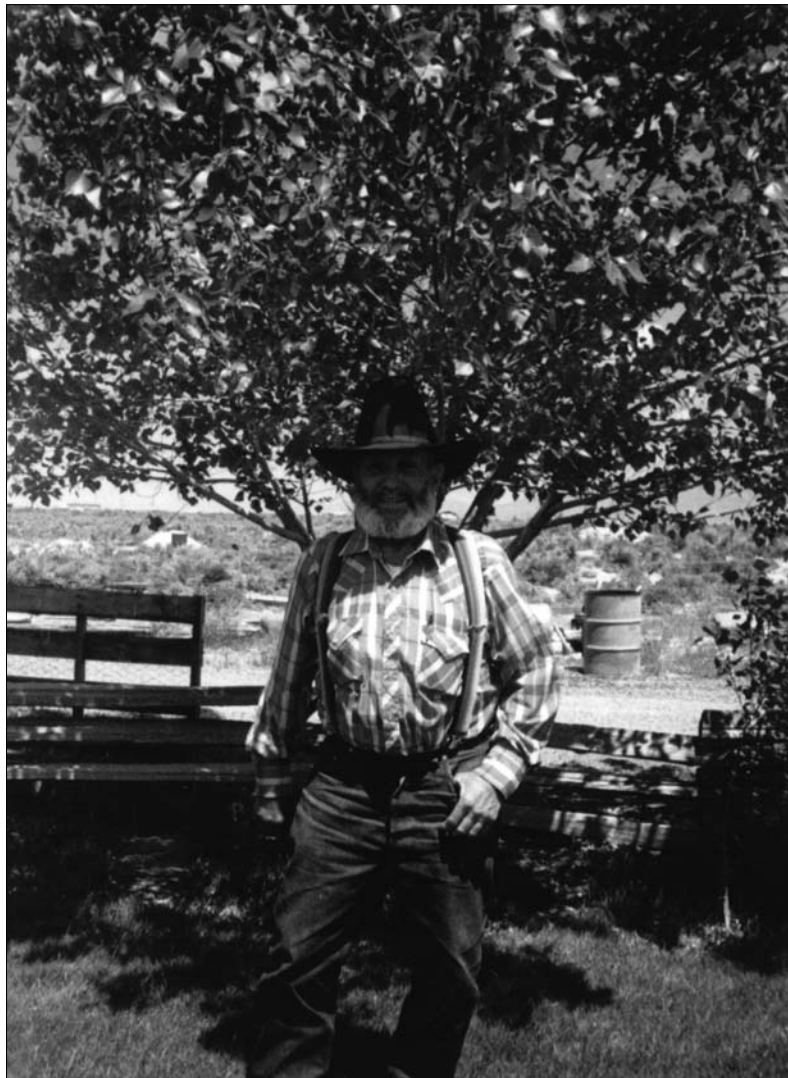
Well, if you think of anything another time that you forgot to share, and you say, "Oh, I forgot to tell you..." I'll be coming back for a while, and you can keep in touch with me. And so on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for sharing your time and your life with us.

Well you're welcome, I enjoyed it.

This is the end of the interview.

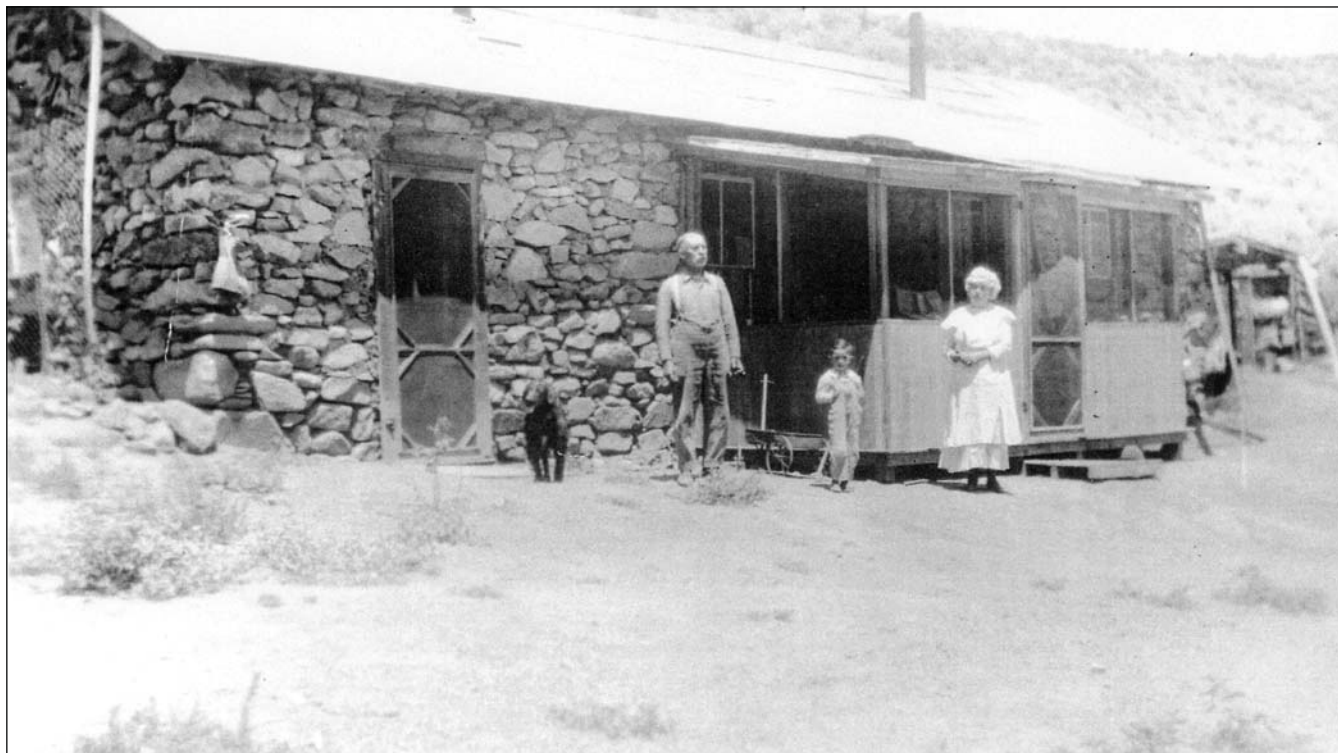
Thank you.

ROBERT E. CHIARA
PHOTOGRAPHS



ROBERT CHIARA
MAY 14, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Robert Chiara's grandparents Harvey Estes, Sr., Laura Estes,
and Stanley Estes at the Ranch House in Corral Canyon, 1919.

(Original photograph owned by Robert Chiara)



Harvey Estes, Sr., Corral Canyon Ranch, 1935, Grandfather of Robert Chiara.
(He lost his right hand in wood saw accident.)

(Original photograph owned by Robert Chiara)

ROBERT E. CHIARA

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

PAUL C. CHRISTOPHER**PREFACE**

Paul Conrad Christopher was born at Hilltop mining camp, January 1913, the youngest of six children. His maternal grandfather, John Nielsen, grandmother and mother were born in Denmark. They immigrated to the United States, first settling in Wyoming where many Danish people had already settled.

Paul's father, Martin P. Christopher, also born in Denmark, escaped an arranged marriage by boarding a ship for America when he was nineteen. He first went to Wyoming, then left for the gold rush at Klondike, returning to marry Paul's mother. She returned with him to the Klondike, and after about ten years, they came to Elko, NV, where the Nielsen family lived. They were running a bar and boarding house.

Grandfather John Nielsen, who had been prospecting and had mining claims, heard about promising mines near Battle Mountain, Lander County. So Paul's father and uncles went there and staked claims. His father

struck gold and Paul has that first piece of ore, with gold on the back side. As was the custom, they put their mining claim up for sale to Wyoming capitalists. Paul's father, uncles and families moved to Hilltop from Wyoming and worked for the mine. His father was blacksmith's helper. Paul was born at the mining camp, the "baby" of six children. Paul gives a vivid description of those early years at a mining camp: the one-room schoolhouse; the freight wagons hauling ore out of the mine with heavy horses pulling the wagons up the steep mountains; riding flyer sleds down steep hills to the canyon when it snowed. He describes their four-room house and getting the fuel—wood and coal—every night. An artists painting of the house is on his wall. Paul describes the miners' working conditions when most miners died young from miners' consumption—rock dust in their lungs.

The family moved to Battle Mountain when Paul was fourteen so he could attend high school. Paul started working the mines with his father. When gold prices went up and Hilltop started mining gold again, Paul and

his father moved back to Hilltop. His mother stayed in Battle Mountain. Over the years, Paul worked in many mines.

Now, many years later, surrounded by family mementos, Paul enjoys living in the same house purchased by his parents in 1929 when he went to high school. Remodeling the house and taking care of the property has been a major activity in his retirement.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Paul Christopher at his home, at 897 North First Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on Friday, April 16, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Christopher. I'm pleased to be here with you this morning to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you please tell us your full name, where you were born, and when.

Paul Christopher: My full name is Paul Conrad Christopher. When I sign things, it's Paul C. Christopher. And I was born in Hilltop, Nevada, January 11, 1913.

Can you tell us about your grandparents, where they were born?

Well, on one side of the family, I can—the other, not too much. My father was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and he came to this country as a young man of nineteen—he ran away from home.

Is this your grandfather you're telling us about?

No, my father.

Did your grandfather come to this country?

No, I don't know anything about my grandparents on my father's side.

I see. So your father was the first of the family to come to this country?

Yes.

Would you tell us your father's name?

Martin Peter Christopher. [It was] Christophersen. He dropped the end of it off when he came to this country, like a lot of them do, and made it Christopher. The S-E-N is the Danish, the way they have their names—Christophersen. But he thought it was too long and he just cut the end off.

Did he ever tell you what brought him here and how he got here?

Well, he would never talk about it very much, but I understand that he came from a rather affluent family in Denmark and they had a young woman arranged for marriage, like they used to do. He didn't like that somehow. In those days, you didn't need a passport—you just went down, and if you had the price of a ticket you could get on a ship. So he just came to America! [chuckles]

How old was he then?

He was nineteen.

And where did he first arrive in America?

Well, that I don't know. He would never say. He would never say anything about his family in Denmark, that I ever heard him say.

Did he know anyone in America?

I don't believe so.

That's quite daring! What finally brought him to Nevada?

Well, he did come to Rock Springs, Wyoming. Apparently there were other Danish people there. That must have been what brought him There. And then he wanted to go to Alaska or the far north for big game hunting. He bought a rifle. That rifle is right here. It's converted into a lamp stand now. [chuckles] Him and another young man [set out], and when they got to Seattle, the Gold Rush was on to the Yukon, so they, like all the rest of them, they forgot about the game hunting and they went gold hunting.

How long did he stay in that area?

Well apparently he was about ten years in—they called it the Klondike.

Now tell me a little about your mother, and also how and where your mother and father met.

Well, now, my mother—the whole family came over, and they came to Wyoming too, apparently. My grandmother died shortly after they came over here.

Can you tell me her name?

No, I don't know her first name. The last name would have been Nielsen. Now there's another change: then they changed their name to Nelson—it should have been Nielsen. So he must have met her in Rock Springs, Wyoming. He was around there for a while. He went up to the gold fields first—and then he came back

and they were married, and she went back with him up to the Yukon or Klondike, they called it.

Did your parents tell you anything about their life in Alaska, or up in the Yukon country?

A few things, yes. One of the incidents was when he was up there at the first part of it: they had missed the boat, some of these gold prospectors there. The boats would come up late in the fall, and of course they would make their last trip. In the winter, they couldn't make it up there. So they didn't have any too much to eat. [For] supplies they had some beans, he said, mostly. And they were getting scurvy. He said they were losing weight and ail that. And then he said one night there—it was a rather strange thing—a moose came and looked [laughs] right through the window of the cabin he was in. They just had oiled paper for window glass, and that moose looked through, he grabbed this rifle that he had, ran out there and shot that moose. And he said they came from—all the other miners there, even the Indians—he called them the Siwash Indians—and they cleaned up every bit of it, the hide and horns [laughs] and the entrails—the Indians took that.

So they had a pretty rough life. Now, when did they leave the Yukon, and then where did they go before they came to Nevada?

Well, they came direct.

Tell me about how that happened.

They came direct down here, because my mother's people were living in Elko at that time, so that's where they came when they came from up north.

Oh, they came back to her family?

They were ready to leave the north. They had worked their claims out and it was time to move on, so they moved down here to where she was. My father didn't have any other relatives.

What did he then do in the Elko region?

I just don't know. I believe right away my grandfather had his mining claims in, and he sent him out here, being that he did mining, asked him if he would come and prospect and see if he could find anything on those claims.

Now you said your grandfather: that's your mother's father asked him?

Yes.

And what was his name?

His name was John Nelson.

Tell me more about what happened after that.

Alright. Well, he had a bar and a little boarding house in Elko—the family run that. And this man came to him that had come from over here around Battle Mountain—he'd come to Elko, and he'd come into his bar and he was telling about these claims that he had staked. He hadn't found anything, but he thought they would turn out good, they were good-looking claims. My Grandfather Nelson and his boys—that would be my uncles—they came out then, and staked these claims.

Where were these claims?

They were up in what was later known as Hilltop.

And in relation to Battle Mountain, where is Hilltop?

Oh, they are approximately nineteen miles southeast of Battle Mountain, in the canyon up there. They call that—Crum Canyon is the official name. That's named after a cattle outfit that run their cattle up in there. And they had their home ranch on the river here, close to Battle Mountain.

And that's all in Lander County?

Yes.

Then tell me more about that. They went to find what was there, and then what happened?

Well, my father took them up on the offer, and he came out here and he said he rented a horse and buggy from a livery stable here in Battle Mountain and drove up there. He went to prospecting around there. He hadn't found too much, and he said he was coming down off the mountain, he was getting ready to pull out of there and go back to Elko. And he just—you know, they all carried prospecting picks—and he struck a rock specimen off the side of this bluff—I have it today, yet! I have the very one! And it was just ordinary rock on one side and gold on the backside of it! [laughing]

Oh my! Do you know what year that was?

That was 1908.

Okay, that's very exciting! Continue telling me about what happened after he discovered that rock. I can imagine the excitement!

Well, I imagine they just went back then, up there, and went to prospect to find the

source of it. There was another prospector up there in the same area—he was prospecting right through there too. He was a shepherd for DuBerg and Anderson Sheep Company in Reno. And this man was called Mat Skow.

Did they both join up together? Or what happened after that?

I don't remember, but I know they were both prospecting in the area and then they made this strike. I have two newspaper articles that were written out of the *Elko Free Press* at that date, and it tells about the whole discovery.

We'll add that to the interview. Tell me the development of that Hilltop mine.

Well, [chuckles] all I know is that they sold the mine. They did mine some of the real rich ore. That article tells how many sacks they got in a few days, or whatever. And then they, of course, put it up for sale.

Was that customary?

Oh, absolutely! That's the way they went in those days. And there was a lot of dirty stuff in those days. You know, it still goes on, I guess. In those days, they sold fraudulent stock and all things like this.

So then he sold it. That's all before you were born?

Yes.

Now, bring me up to your birth date. What did your mother and father do after they sold the mine?

Well, my father stayed there, in fact, my uncles too. They all moved out there,

quite a few of the family from Rock Springs, Wyoming.

To the Hilltop area?

Yes, and they all went to work for the mine. My father worked as a blacksmith. He was a blacksmith's helper in the shop where they sharpened the steel.

Were you born there at the mine?

Yes, I was born in 1913. The camp was already pretty well underway then.

I see from your biographical sketch that Helen Martin, George, Alice, Goldie or Ethel are listed as your brothers and sisters. What is the order of the birth of the children? Where did you fit in?

Well, I was the baby of the family—I was the last one.

Did your mother and father tell you about what life was like in that camp as these children were being born and your father was working? Do you have any recollections of that early life?

Oh, I certainly do! All I can tell you is some of the things that stuck in my mind as a young boy. One thing was the cowboys and the horses. See, Hilltop lays in a narrow canyon, and all the houses were built on one side of the canyon except what we called the "uptown" part. There was one on the other side.

Do you have any photos of that?

Yes. Once or twice a year—I can't even remember—but the street was a road. And then on the other side of the road was a little

creek. It dried up in the late summer, but most of the year it was running down through there. So they would come up there. In those days, the cowboys didn't haul their horses in trailers or anything fancy like that! Each cowboy had about ten horses, I think. They had them for spare when they were riding.

For their transportation?

Yes. So there would be the wagon. I guess you'd call that the chuck wagon. And then they would come up through there, and they had to come right up through the town there, and there were maybe forty or fifty head of horses. They would drive them right straight up—all colors.

Where would they be going?

They were going on the other side of Hilltop to gather their cattle in the fall, I guess it was. There's a place over there called "The Park." It's a mountain park. The cattle would be in there, and they would come up through. They'd be gone maybe three, four days, and then they would come back down through there.

Did they stay at the Hilltop camp to eat or water their horses?

No, they never stayed right there, that I know of. I believe they had a place down the canyon, several miles down Hilltop Canyon there.

So that was excitement for the kids when they came through?

Oh, to *me* it certainly was! And then another thing was the freight wagons, the big heavy freight wagons that hauled the ore out

of there. They came down off the mountain where the mine was, just maybe a hundred yards below where our house was. It was a side draw or gulch, they called it, and the road came down that. And they would come down out of there. What struck me was, there were big, heavy draft horses pulling them wagons. And when they came down there, that was steep! And those wagons were pushing them horses, and that teamster, he had to stand up there and hold back the horses with the reins. At the same time, they had brakes—they called them "rough locks." They were just big hunks of wood attached on the end of a lever, and he had to pull back hard on that lever and that pressed those wood blocks against the wheels to hold them back as much as he could.

Were there ever any accidents?

Yes, there was one I remember: that was when he was going *up* the hill. One of the wagons got loose, and that old teamster was deaf—we knew that—and he didn't hear it go, I guess. It broke loose and down off the hill it came! It went off the hill on another—not that same draw where the road was, but further over. And it came down there, and about half-way down the hill it was all smashed to pieces.

Anyone killed?

Oh, no, it was just an empty wagon. His name, as near as I remember, was Joe Wilkins. He was one of the freighters that hauled ore out of there.

How many years did you live at the Hilltop camp?

Well, I lived there 'til I was fourteen years old.

Okay, so I want to ask you a lot of questions. I want you to think back into your household to your family life. I want you first to describe what you lived in. What did you live in?

Well, we had a four-room house, just a mining camp [laughs] way of construction, I guess. I have a picture on the wall right over there. That was taken not too many years ago by an artist friend of mine. It was just a photograph.

We'll get a camera and take a picture of that.

At that time, it hadn't been lived in for a long time—it's run down. But it was just a four-room house, and that's where we lived.

Now, there were a lot of children, so tell me what it was like in that household then, what a day was like. Describe a typical day in that house as you were growing up?

Well, being the youngest one, some of them were already gone. I believe my oldest sister wasn't around too much. She was down here going to high school in Battle Mountain. She was living with the Hancock family that lived here in Battle Mountain. One of my brothers worked in the mine. Well, maybe not quite real early years. That's all that I can remember.

When you were growing up, what kind of chores did you have to do? I'm sure everyone had their chores. What was your day like as you were growing up, eight, nine, ten?

We always had to get in our fuel at night. We burned wood and coal, even cooked with a coal stove. We would have wood for kindling to get the fire started, and then we would burn coal. So the kids—myself and the brothers—we had

to get in the wood and the coal. That was our chores. We did have some chickens, and maybe we had to feed the chickens, I don't remember.

Did your mother have to cook for anyone else outside the family, as some of them had to?

No.

She took care of the family?

That's all.

Was there any recreation for the children or the family? What did you do for fun?

Well, they just played. [laughs] They played a little ball, what passed for baseball. They didn't know enough about it. One thing I remember, though, in the winter—the snow was quite heavy there in the winter—and we had those Flexible Flyers, those sleds, and we would get way up past Swackhamer's store and further up on the hill there, being that everything sloped down canyon, so we'd get started up there and we'd get on those sleds. We would either set on it, or we would lay flat on it. It had a steering device on the front where you could guide it. And we'd get on that and let it go, and we'd come down! After a few times it would kind of pack the snow down and make a real good runway, and we could go down the canyon maybe a quarter of a mile before it would gradually slow up. And then we would pull it back up there and come down again!

Now, I've interviewed Bruce Swackhamer. You mentioned the father's store. Can you tell me anything about that store?

Oh yes, definitely! That was the store, and also the post office. Mr. Swackhamer was the postmaster.

Was that Bruce's father?

Yes. In the back of the store, it was kind of partitioned off, and that was the post office. And the mail would come up there. I think it came every day for a while, and then eventually it was only three times a week.

How did it come?

Well, it came by automobile. There were some of them real oldtimers with the big wheels. Maxwell, I think, was the name of the automobile, the one I remember. There were several, I guess. The one I remember was Joe Silvera. That was his name. He was Portuguese descent.

Tell me about how many families lived at the Hilltop camp when you were growing up?

There wasn't really too many. There may have been less than a dozen, I would say.

Really?! Were there a lot of single men who worked up there?

Oh yes, definitely. And they stayed in what they called the boarding house. They would have the meals for them. They would eat, and then they would have rooms.

About how many boarding houses were there?

Well, they had two of them, one across the road from the other one.

Where did these single men, miners, come from?

Well, they were just drifters. Like all mining camps, especially back then, they would come from everywhere, and they

would make a stake. They'd stay a month or two, and then they would be gone. I remember once, it must have been 1918 when the war was over, World War I. There was one up there, and he had his uniform on. And that's what drew my attention to him. I don't think he stayed there. They would come up from Battle Mountain to rustle a job, see if they could get work. And they would ride up on the mail stage. I can remember him—he didn't stay—but I remember him. He was in uniform. He must have just been discharged.

Now tell me about school, from your earliest memories. What kind of school did they have at Hilltop?

Well, we had this schoolhouse. Now that was down below where most of the people lived there. It was maybe two or three hundred yards down the canyon. There was enough flat area there, they built the schoolhouse. When I started, it had been there for several years. Mrs. Swackhamer was the teacher. When myself and the two Swackhamer boys were in the first grade, she was our teacher.

Was it a one-room schoolhouse, or did they have separate grades?

[laughs] No, it was definitely one room! They had all the grades, right from one up to twelve, and the teacher would spend a little time with each one. They would come up to the front of the seating arrangement and sit on a bench there, and then she would teach them from there. Then they would go back and she would call up maybe the first graders. That's the way it was done.

How many children—I'm sure it ranged in number—but about how many children were in this classroom over the period of time?

Oh, if we had eight or ten, [laughs] that was a big deal!

The families that were there: what were some of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds? What countries did their families come from? Were there any other ethnic groups there?

Oh, yes, there was different ones. I can remember there were some Spanish-speaking: they were Mexican, mostly, I guess. The ones I remember—they could speak enough [English] so you could understand them. They weren't just fresh from Mexico. There were several of them.

Did everyone get along?

Oh, yes, everybody got along fine.

Did your father tell you about the work he was doing as a blacksmith and some of his experiences there?

No, not really too much. He was a great man for politics. He enjoyed talking politics. I remember he came home one night with a black eye! He'd got into a fight, and it was just a dispute over politics. He was a Republican. [laughs] They could get some arguments about politics!

Was he active in politics as a leader?

Oh, no, not at all.

Were there mining unions at the time you were at Hilltop? Did they have unions for the workers?

Not at that time. But I'll tell you what I do remember: in the schoolhouse, they said that that had been a union hail that they had

brought over from another mining camp, from Tenabo. And there was a little shed attached to that, and there was a lot of fancy things mere that they said was there for the union: they wore a special kind of a little uniform or something, epaulets up—I remember seeing them pinned up on their shoulders. And that was their labor union. But they had had that more in this other camp, Tenabo, over on the other side of the mountains there.

Do you know anything about the workers there, what the conditions were for the ones in the mines?

Yes, I definitely do.

Can you tell about that?

They drilled for a long time with hand drilling; they called it single or double-jacking. One man would pound the drill himself and turn it, and that was single-jacking. And then with two men, one of them would turn the drill and the other one could swing a heavier hammer. So they called that double-jacking when there was two men. And then later on they did get some jackhammers in the mine. But at that time, they were dry, and all those miners got miners consumption. They'd breathe that rock dust into their lungs. They all died when they were about [in their] late forties or fifties. They died young because of that. It just ate their lungs out. They called it "miner's con." It was miner's consumption of that rock dust.

When that was discovered that it was happening, were any steps taken to help with the health of the miners?

[laughs] I doubt it very much. I can't remember. But later on, then, they got onto

using wet. They used water coming through the drill. And then they would wet down the area, the stope, or whatever they were working on.

Was this underground or above-ground mining?

No, this was underground mining.

Were there any disasters? Any collapses or any deaths?

No, I can never remember any. It's hard rock—it was extremely hard rock, and so the ground held up good. There was no caving or anything.

Tell me about the health and medical situation then. What happened when your mother had her babies, or if you needed a doctor?

[laughs] I think it was just left up to the individuals. I've never heard of anything.

No doctor there in camp?

I think even back then, they probably had the Nevada Industrial, like they have now.

What is Nevada Industrial?

Well, that's a state insurance policy where if someone gets injured on a job, they get...

But was there a doctor at Hilltop?

[laughs] Oh, definitely not! The one doc, when I was born, he came up there in a buggy, and I believe it was Dr. Clark. He was in Battle Mountain, and they would get word to him some way.

I guess everyone had to know how to do first aid themselves?

Pretty much, yes. When we got sick, we just had the old-fashioned remedies.

What language did your parents speak in your home?

It would have been nice if they had taught us kids another language, and we would have known, then. But no, he didn't want us to know. So it was strictly the English language, and they, both of them, talked rather broken English because of that.

Did your mother have any life outside the house? Did she have any women friends at Hilltop?

Oh, I guess they would come and visit, sit down and talk and visit for a while. That was about all. They had little things going on at the school. They'd have public dances, and they would hold them in the schoolhouse.

Would your family go to them?

Yes. My father wouldn't go. He was against dancing, in fact. He got after my sisters for dancing.

Was that because of religious reasons?

Well, I don't know. It possibly was, although he was strongly against any form of religion too. He said when he was growing up in Denmark he was compelled to read the Bible, and he didn't have much use for religion.

Did he frown on anything frivolous?

Yes, he did!

So that might have been the reason. What was the relationship—did he see that your mother didn't do that, or did she feel free to dance if she wanted?

Well, yes, she would get up and dance, I remember, in the little dances we had there, and Christmas or whatever.

Did you young people dance?

Well, we got started real young. He come down on that, so that's why I've never learned to dance, I think, the main reason.

Was he a stern father?

Well, yes, he was.

Disciplinarian?

Well, yeah, I would say so.

Did your mother have any spirit of lightness or fun? Or was it a pretty hard, serious life?

Well, it wasn't all that hard and serious. And we got along fine with our mother. We got along a lot better with her than we did with our father. It was just a different personality.

When and why did you finally leave Hilltop? First, when was that? You said you were fourteen.

Well, the mine had closed down. The whole thing had moved down the canyon to what they called New Hilltop. The old camp, we had our house there, so we remained up there. And then the whole thing closed up. They moved out of there.

No more gold?

Well, the mine had shut down. There was one other family—they were living down at New Hilltop, that was a mile down the canyon—that was the McGovern family. And the reason they stayed there, they wanted a watchman. When they moved off, they left all the mill, the machinery and everything. So he had the job of remaining to just be a watchman. My father stayed up at the other place because he had mining claims of his own on the other side of the canyon up there. He wanted to hold onto them and do a little work, trying to develop them.

So then when you were fourteen, you said you left. You were at New Hilltop then?

No, we were still up at Old Hilltop. But see, they had a school up there, and I graduated out of the eighth grade and got my diploma and everything from the eighth grade. So then the next step was, of course, high school. They had to move down here so I could go to high school.

And what did they do with the house at Hilltop?

They just left it there, and it's finally gone now. You can find traces of it. There's one tree. But I planted that tree years later. There's one big Lombardy poplar growing, still there, right where the house was.

Now, when they moved into Battle Mountain, tell me about that.

Well, we lived in a rented house, and my father got a job then at the Betty O'Neal Mine—that was another mine about twelve miles out of Battle Mountain. It was a silver mine. So he worked there for a while.

Doing what?

Well, he was a miner, he worked in the mine.

How many were still in your household? Was it just you by then, when you moved into Battle Mountain?

No, it was just myself and my sister—she was about four years older than me.

I see. And she was no longer in school, right?

Oh yes, she just couldn't learn in school. She just was a [laughs] moron, I guess you could call it. Anyway, she couldn't learn, but she did go, took some sewing or something in high school, for a year or so.

And you started high school then?

Yes.

Okay, tell me, when you were fourteen, when you came to Battle Mountain, what did Battle Mountain look like, and what was it like?

Well, it was a lot smaller than it is today! In fact, the high school was right where the Battle Mountain Hospital is, on the exact piece of ground. They demolished the high school and built the hospital there. They wanted that lot that belonged to the county, I guess. It was a two-story, nice-looking building and a lot of people in Battle Mountain thought that it shouldn't have been done, but it was.

Now, let's go back: You were fourteen, and they brought you to Battle Mountain. You had been living at Hilltop. What was it like for you to come to Battle Mountain and start in a big school in another city?

Well, it was a little strange, of course, but kids adapt fast—it didn't take long. It just became a routine, going to school every day. We had to walk across town.

How far was that?

Well, it was possibly three-quarters of a mile. It wasn't too short a distance, but not too far away.

I'm sure you made a lot of friends in high school.

Well, yes.

Describe a typical school day, when you first started high school.

Well, everybody gathered there in what they called a study hall. The whole school was only about fifty kids, I guess, of course, including from freshmen on to seniors. And you would have a class, then you would go down the hall to individual classrooms.

What were your classes?

Well, they would be algebra to start with—and English and just typical, basic... history.

Did you bring your own lunch?

No, I walked home every day at lunch.

You had time to do that?

Oh, yeah, you'd make it home and just ate a little and start back.

Was there any recreation at the school? Sports or dances?

Oh, well, yes, definitely.

Was that an important time in your life? going to high school and having that new kind of a life?

Well, I guess so. [laughs]

Did you begin to determine areas in your personal life of what you wanted to do as you were going through high school?

No, I really didn't, I never did. I just drifted from one thing to another. No, I didn't have any goals or anything.

No specific...

No.

What was life like for your mother and father, now that most of the children were gone, and they were in a city, compared to Hilltop? Did their life change?

Not a great deal—not with my father, certainly. Down here, of course, we had electric lights. He wouldn't have electric lights in his house!

He wouldn't?!

Oh, not I don't know why, but he just wouldn't. We had coal oil lamps which we used in Hilltop—for years.

How did your mother feel about that? Did she ever express it?

Well, she was easy-going.

Did she join any women's organizations?

No. I think she went to church, I think Methodist church, on Sundays or whatever.

Now think about the town: Compared to today, what was the town like? For instance, the population, the economy? What was it like then?

Well, the main street of Battle Mountain was just about like it is. It hasn't changed too much! There was the Nevada Hotel and on the corner where the Owl Club is now was a grocery store: that was Horton's. They had both groceries and what they called dry goods. They sold clothing and stuff—they called that dry goods in those days—and then the grocery part of it. And then they had two or three saloons. But it was laid out just about in the area that it is today on Front Street.

That's when traffic came through the town, before [Highway] 80, right?

Absolutely, yes. All the traffic came right down through there.

Now, moving on from high school, what was your life like? What kind of work did you do? Did you always live here?

I graduated out of school in 1931, and believe me, that was at the height of the Great Depression. There was no employment. There just wasn't any—especially for a kid just getting out of school. And so it was just kind of rough going for a few years, although my dad saved his money—he was a great one to save money—and he didn't have any work either, but we made it. We went back up to Hilltop again, to the mining claims. In about 1933 or 1934 when Roosevelt got in office, the price of gold jumped from twenty to thirty-five dollars an ounce. That was a pegged price. You had to sell your gold or your ore, it had to be smelted, and they had to sell it to the government at that thirty-five dollars an ounce—it was a

pegged price. But that enabled a lot of these marginal mines around here to start working their gold.

So you went back. Did your father work for a company? Or just on his own?

No, no. Well, he did *lease* for a while. He leased out here at what is now Battle Mountain Gold. At that time it was called Copper Basin. There was copper ore out there, and the company had closed up and they were letting it out to leases. So he leased there, him and another man by the name of Kattenhorn.

Now, did you move back? Was the house still there?

Oh, definitely! Yes, we moved up there and lived in the house.

Did you work in the mines then?

Yes. Yes.

Tell me what kind of work you were doing then.

Well, it was just the same thing. You would drill your round.

Drill your what?

Drill the round—that meant the round of holes—and then you blasted them. If the ground wasn't too hard, we would use an auger. That was kind of like a wood auger, only if the ore was soft—and some of it was—the vein matter was usually that way—and you just augured a hole in there about maybe three foot deep. Or if it was hard, then you had to drill it with the rock drill. And then at the end of the day, you would load those holes and blast them. And then the next morning, you'd

go back, then you had the job of “mucking it out,” mucking out the pile of ore.

Was that the first time you actually did mining?

Oh, yes.

And who taught you?

[laughs] Well, it didn't take much teaching! It took a little muscle and a bent back [laughs] mostly!

So how long did you do that?

Oh, oft and on. And I've worked, you know, in different places. I worked for one of my uncles here. He was in Oregon, he came back down here and built a house in Winnemucca and I worked for him for a while.

What was his name?

His name was Nelson. He was one of the Nelsons, Chris Nelson.

When you were back at Hilltop, it was you, your mother, your sister, and father? Were you all back in Hilltop?

Oh, no, it was just me and my father would go up There.

Oh, and your mother stayed here?

We would come home once a week and get supplies and get our mail.

So she was here alone?

Oh, yes, she would stay here in Battle Mountain.

Did she mind that?

Oh, once in a while she would go up there in the summer. Oh, she didn't mind!

She probably enjoyed that! [laughter] Did she make some friends then, or have any outside activities when everyone was gone?

Well, she was a great one to go visiting. She had different ones that she would visit.

Were they mainly people who also were from Denmark?

No, because at that time there wasn't. There was one lady that lived across right here, close to the railroad tracks where we're talking right now, and she was an Irish woman. I forget her name now. And she would visit with her.

Did your mother do sewing or handiwork?

Ah, no, not too much. Oh, she'd keep up with the family—darn the socks and stuff like that.

Did the children leave the area when they grew up? your brothers and sisters? As they got older, did they leave?

Yes, most of them.

Where did they go?

Well, my oldest sister became a schoolteacher, and she taught in Yerington, she taught down below here where that big mine is now. I forget the name of it.

What was her first name?

Well after she got married her name was Butler.

And her first name?

Helen. And then her second husband was Virgil Good. She met him during the war.

Where does she live?

Well, she's gone now. She died in 1987, right next door to me here where I am.

Did she have children?

No.

She lived next door to you here? She came back to Battle Mountain?

She came back from California to retire here. She was about in her late seventies.

I see. So how many years did you live close to each other?

Well, for about eight years, I believe.

Where did your other sisters and brothers go to?

They scattered out. My other sister lived in another mining camp for a long time over at Cortez, and then also at Midas.

What is her first name?

Her name was Alice.

Did she marry someone in the mines?

Yes. Well, she married a man by the name of Isaac, and he came from a family over near Cortez. He was born and raised on a little ranch back in the hills. He was a cowboy.

Did they have children?

Yes, they had one daughter. And then that daughter has had two boys, and they're pushing fifty now!

And where do they all live?

Well, they live in Salinas, California—they're still there. And then one of them had a daughter, and she's living in Las Vegas.

Are there other brothers or sisters? Did we cover them all?

No, then I had another brother, and he was born blind.

Oh no! Was that George?

No, that was Martin. So in his early years, he went to a school for the blind in Berkeley, California. After he was out of there he'd come home and visit, you know, in the summers for a while. And then he stayed right there. He stayed in Oakland, California. He stayed there until he died, and that's been about ten years ago.

Oh my! And then any others?

And then the other boy, George, he went insane.

Oh, no!

Yes.

Oh.

Up in the mining camp, we didn't know how, nobody in the family...But he liked to hang around them miners, and the tougher they were, the better he liked them! He used a lot of profanity, and just kind of a rough, tough kid.

How did your father handle that, since he was so stern?

Well, he beat him up a few times. But that's the way it went. When he got to be about eighteen—he worked in the mine—and then when he was eighteen or nineteen, he just took off, and he was roving all over the country on freight trains.

Oh, lost track of him?

Oh, yeah, for a while. And then finally when he come back, you could sit down and talk to him for a half-hour or so and you wouldn't notice a thing. And then he would say things that were just...You'd know that he wasn't normal.

Oh, how hard for your parents.

So he was finally committed down in Sparks.

Oh, your poor mama!

Oh, yes.

That was heartache. So, now, you generally stayed in this area all the time?

Almost all the time, until I was in the military, of course.

Tell me about that.

Well, we went through the Depression, and World War II is what picked things up. And there was advertising clear up in this area for people to come down to California and work in the shipyards, or aircraft factories. And so a lot of them right here from Battle Mountain did that. I myself went to Mare

Island [Vallejo, California]. I was under Civil Service, working for the government.

What did you do?

I was in the boiler shop where they repaired boiler makers. And I was a boiler maker's helper. That's where I worked.

How long did you do that?

Well, I was there for about a year and then I got drafted into the Army. Part of the idea was, maybe I could beat the draft [laughs] but it didn't work that way!

So what happened when you were drafted?

I was taken to, right in San Francisco—it's gone now—that camp they had there. I can't think of the name of it—right in San Francisco—just for a day or two, and then we went to Camp Campbell Kentucky for basic training. And then from there to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and then on overseas to North Africa. Then we went into Sicily.

Oh my!

Oh, I was one of the first waves of troops to go ashore. The only ones ahead of us were the paratroopers. They dropped the paratroopers and then we went across from North Africa and went to Sicily.

Did you come out of it without any injuries?

Yes. Actually, we didn't see too much combat in Sicily. We saw some, but just little "skirmishes," they call it in the Army.

Now, when you came out, did you come right back here?

Well, from there we went back to England, and then I was in the military police in Paris. And when the war was over, yeah, I came back. At that time, the G.I. Bill of Rights, you could go back and pick up the same job that they had drafted [you out of]. That was the arrangements. So I went right back down to Mare Island and went back to work there.

Oh! For how long?

For approximately a year, I'd say.

And then did you come back here then?

Well, no, I went back to France because I had a girlfriend that I had made in Pails. I went back to marry her. She couldn't come, because she had tuberculosis. And so they brought a whole boatload of them—"War brides" they called them. But she couldn't pass the physical.

You couldn't bring her back?

No, not while I was still a soldier. But I went back after the war to marry her. And it didn't work out. I got back there, she was pregnant with someone else.

With someone else! Oh, my, no!

That was too much for me!

That was a heartbreak.

It sure was.

So because of that you never married?

Yeah.

Were your parents still alive when you came back?

Oh yes. They were getting well up in age, though.

So tell me, when you came back, then what did you do?

I remember that when I got back it was in July and we had to get our assessment work done. They was worried about that, that we wouldn't get the assessment work done.

What does that mean?

That means you have to do so much work on your mining claims, each year.

Oh, because they were stilt mining through all that?

Oh, yeah, they were still holding onto those claims. So I got back just in time to get up there and do the work to hold those.

You knew how to do that?

Oh yes. That's a minor thing; nobody does beyond what they *should* do, I guess.

So then you had to pick up on your life again. So then tell me about that.

Well, let's see, I did a few little odd work, I guess. I would go to California in the wintertimes to get out of the winter.

To see your family?

No, down there to Oakland. And I'd find a job there and work there in the winter, and then come back. Then I would go back up in the mine. We were shipping ore out of the mine by then. World War II kind of broke that up, because they wouldn't allow any mining.

They wouldn't sell you the dynamite during the war, see. That went to the war effort.

Oh, they needed all that, yes.

So the mining was just dead—especially for small operations.

Now when did you get this home?

We bought this in 1929, after they'd come down here, when I was going to high school. We lived in a rented house for about a year, and then they bought this property from the Lemaire family that owned it. It was an old ramshackle sort of a house. It was up in front, where my lawn is today. Finally, I moved it back here. I had it drug back here: jacked it up and got rollers under it and rolled it back here. And then I worked on it over the years, remodeling and remodeling and finally got it the way it is now.

Wonderful! And a wonderful location. So did you stay here then, except for your winters in California? This was home?

Yes. And then we finally sold our mining property in Hilltop.

What year?

It must have been 1957, I think. I got payments, then, for twenty years.

Oh, wonderful!

They were all paid off about three or four years ago.

And then tell me about your parents. I guess they were aging by then.

Oh, definitely, yes.

Were their last years free of any illness?

No, my mother had a stroke, and she was just paralyzed for about two years, and then she got another stroke. That's the way it usually goes.

Who took care of her?

Well, my sisters would take turns coming up from California to take care of her.

How did your father handle that?

Well, he was ten years older. He was in his eighties by then. He didn't like it of course. It was a terrible shock to him. He was dying too, he was an old man and just sat around until he died, that's all.

Were you living with them? When you were back here, you were still living with them?

Yes. That house you can see from here—I built that, and we were living over there, except for my father—he wouldn't move over there! He lived in the old house, it was side-by-side.

Who lives in that house now? Do you rent it?

Oh, right now there's no one. There's been a young man in there, and he moved out about three or four days ago. Some of his stuff is still there. He keeps coming back and getting it. But apparently he must be buying it, because the real estate took their "for sale" sign off of it.

I want to find out a little bit about what changes occurred in Battle Mountain when the better highways came here, and then when [Highway] 80 was developed and detoured the traffic from the middle of Battle Mountain.

Well, that hasn't been too many years ago, I-80. The traffic came right down through Front Street. At one intersection here, where you cross the railroad tracks, traffic was so heavy. They were working on that bypass around town—it took them several years. I understand they got the grades and then they have to let them settle for a year or so. And where they build the overpasses, it all has to settle for some time. So finally, when it was all opened, then of course it took the heat off the traffic coming down through Front Street here. And we don't have any lights now. We have a four-way stop there, and it seems to work fine.

So it was good for the residents, but what about the businesses? Did it take away business because the traffic didn't come through and stop and eat or sleep or buy things or get gas?

Well [laughs] I really don't know, but I imagine it must have, because they came through here, right through town. And of course the business people *knew* probably, they were going to lose a lot, but there are still plenty of them that will pull off into town to get gas. The bus comes through here, the Greyhound and all that.

And there's been a rejuvenation of the gold mining with the new techniques. What are the changes since the new mining systems have come, and what has it done to the Battle Mountain region?

Well, for quite a number of years, mining was rather dead in Battle Mountain around The area. And then what livened things up was not the gold mining, it was the barium mining, and the turquoise mining, to some extent. That was the big deal for a while here, and our first boom was with the barium.

What year was that?

Well, that's been about ten years, around late 1970s and early eighties. And then the bottom dropped out of that. I understand they started shipping in so much barium from China and from South America or other places. They said they brought it into Galveston, Texas, at the seaport there. They could get their barium at a lower price, I suppose. And then about then they were not oil drilling so much, and most of the barium was used in the oil fields, in the oil drilling. So anyway, Battle Mountain kind of fell away for a while there. And then it was picked up with the gold mining: they were looking for gold then. Well, I'd sold my property a few years before that, even. But then they moved in, like this one up here. It was called Duval to start with. Now it's Battle Mountain Gold. But they drilled there, they drilled for two or three years, and then they finally came out in the paper, they had enough blocked out to open and start mining it. It has kept the town going, for, let's see ...fifteen years, at least—going good.

I'm sure a lot of new people came in.

Oh yes! Sure, because they had to hire a lot.

Did it affect the town? How did the people here react, and how did it affect the changes in Battle Mountain?

Well, everyone liked to see more activity in town and more people coming in: it was beneficial to everyone, really. But the town got a little rough there for a few years. We had a shoot-out right on Front Street!

Tell me about that!

Well, they said there was a couple of young men got into an argument in one of the bars, and one of them jumped up and went home and got his gun, I guess, and he came back and he invited the other young man out on Front Street there, and shot him to death!

Who were these men?

Oh, it's been a long time! a good ten years ago. I can't remember. I didn't know them, anyway. I think they had kind of a motorcycle club. They were kind of going that route, you know. Kind of macho, or whatever they call it. [laughs]

One of the things that impressed me so much, because this is the first time that I ever came to Battle Mountain—I started in February—is that people can still leave their doors unlocked and cars unlocked and that's rare in this country, even in small towns near cities. Has that changed? Or is that still a nice feeling of safety?

Well, I lock *my* doors every night! And I do when I go out and go anywhere in town. But I'm living in a real quiet part of town. Down here we don't have any fear of anything like that at all. Although some parts may be a little different.

When the county seat moved to Battle Mountain, I know that in Austin they weren't very happy. But then it moved up here. Tell me about what it was like, how the people felt and how that changed the city.

Well, I don't believe it changed it too much, because some of them were already moving down here. I think the Sheriff had moved down before that, even. He was holding out in Battle Mountain more than he was up there.

And it kind of gradually came that way. And some of them didn't like it—Austin certainly didn't, because it kind of killed their economy to a great extent. But majority rules, you know, so when it came to a vote, Battle Mountain had grown considerable, and Austin was hanging on, but to this day it hasn't really grown that much. So we got the courthouse down here.

That was a school once, I understand.

Yeah, that was a grammar school. That was built in 1916, they tell me. It was vacant about that time, because they had a new grammar school.

It looks more like a courthouse than a school.

Well, it does, the way it's built with them pillars. I'd go over there and have business in there, like when I had a mining claim. I still do go and look in the books, the big maps they have in there, about different areas.

I know that there's a senior center that Francis Williams said that you go there. Tell me about that senior center and the activity for seniors here in this town.

When I would meet Francis, she would say, "Why don't you come over here and eat with us?" "No..." I just put them off. There's a lot more that could come there right now, but they seem to hold back from it. But after I *did* get started, after my sister died and it's very nice. We had some, we called them "regulars." They're just there all the time every day. And a lot of them will come, and you'll see them for a while, and then you won't. I don't know.

How many go for lunch?

Well, I would say there's probably about a dozen.

Are there activities after?

Well, there always has been, but now they have, on Wednesdays they play Bingo after we eat. Thursdays they play Bridge. They play Cribbage and some other card game. But I'm not a card player—neither is my brother-in-law.

Your dad didn't let you!

No, no!

You'd probably still feel guilty!

Yeah.

I'll bet you don't gamble!

No, no! [laughs]

What is your life like now?

Well, it's kind of just sitting around. [chuckles] I eat lunch over there every day at the senior center, which gives you one good balanced meal a day, and then I do for myself the rest of the time—once in a while eat in the restaurants.

Take care of your property?

Yes.

Do you have any special interests?

Well, I'm a Jehovah Witness, and we have meetings right at my house here. We have one meeting on Saturday mornings, and we have one of the brothers from Winnemucca that

comes here and we have not too many any more, but we have a few, and they meet here.

About how many?

Let's see, right now about six or seven.

Was that after your father died?

Oh, yes!

Because he wouldn't have approved probably?

Oh, no! he sure wouldn't!

Finally have your freedom.

Regularly I go to Winnemucca on Sundays to attend. We have our Kingdom Hall down there.

Do you go alone, or are there others here in Battle Mountain?

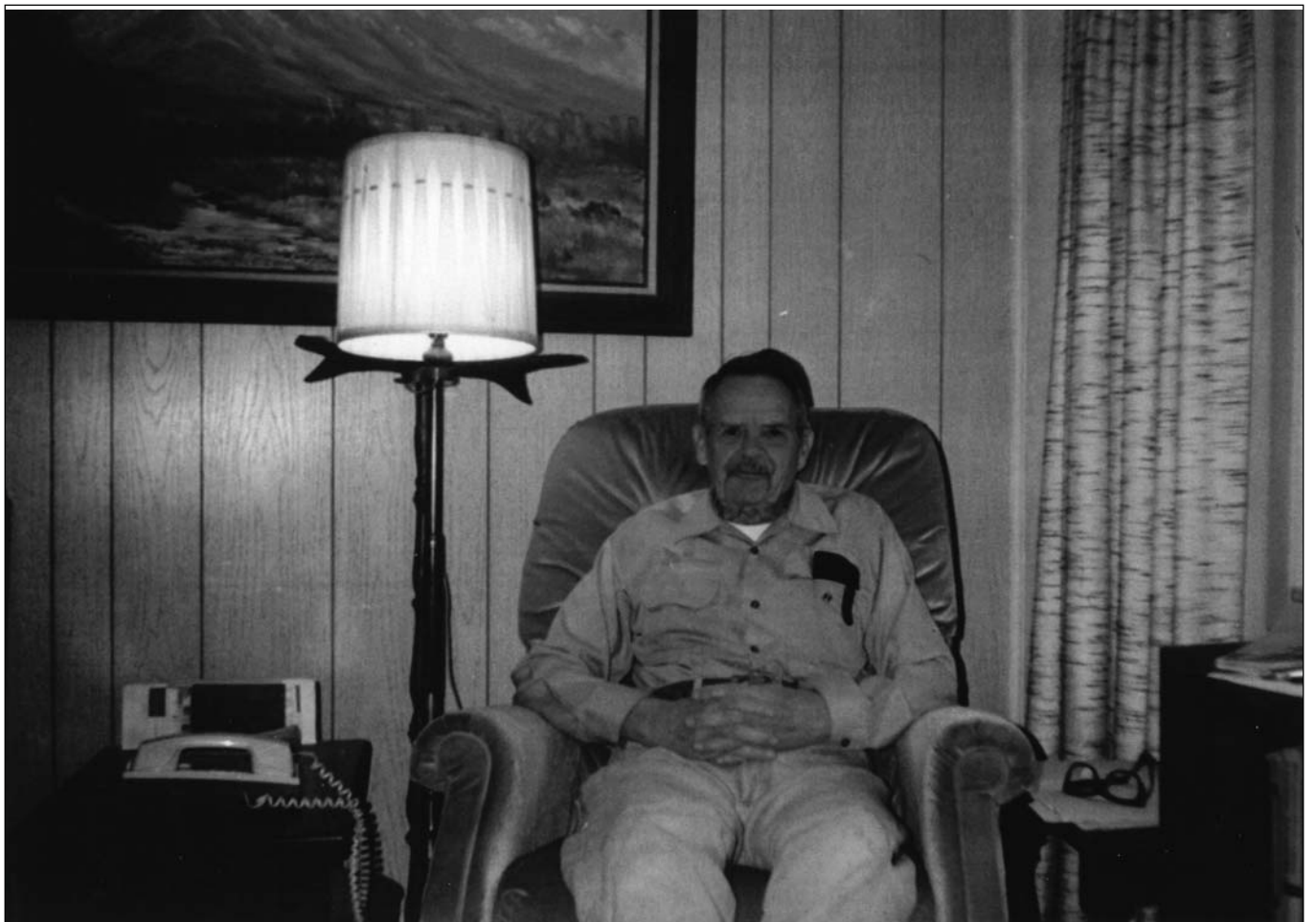
I go alone a lot of times, and then there's another woman. The women, we call them "sisters." So there are one or two other sisters. And there's another one just recently, working down here on the 25 Ranch. She's married to a cowboy, and she'll be going with us, I guess. So there would be about four of us. There's one we sometimes pick up in Valmy.

Is there anything else, before we end the interview, about Battle Mountain, or even back to the mining, that I didn't ask you, or you haven't told me, before we end this interview?

Oh [laughs] I really can't think of anything. It's been pretty well covered in a general way. We've pretty well covered it.

I want to thank you so much on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project. This is the end of the interview.

PAUL C. CHRISTOPHER
PHOTOGRAPHS



PAUL CHRISTOPHER
APRIL 16, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Left to right: Carter, Matt Skow, John Nelson, unknown, Carrie Doblin, Pauline Nelson, unknown. Children in front: Johnny Nelson, Margaret Nelson, Emma Nelson Hilltop, 1908.

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, Photograph #2528)

PAUL C. CHRISTOPHER ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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CONSTANCE DORIAN**PREFACE**

Constance Dorian, born in Sacramento, California in 1918, lived at the Natomas Dredging Company mining camp in Sacramento County where her parents worked. Her mother was the purchasing agent and when Constance was sixteen, she worked on warehouse inventories and became interested in office work. She went to business school in Sacramento then worked at several office jobs there.

Henry Dorian was also working for the Natomas Company drilling and testing the gold ore. Constance met him at the boarding house for the working men where he lived. They married in 1940.

In 1952 when Natomas Dredging Company started an operation in Copper Canyon, Nevada, Mr. Dorian came to work there as resident engineer and dredge master. Constance and their son joined him and they lived at the Copper Canyon dredge camp until the operation closed three years later. They

moved to Battle Mountain where their son was attending school.

The Dorians leased the Nevada Hotel in 1955 and Constance worked full-time for thirty years, handling the office, the cash register, renting rooms, and getting out the payrolls for the waitresses, chef and cooks. Employees were offered free rooms in the hotel as part of the agreement when they were hired. Although many waitresses were local, the cooks came out of agencies in Salt Lake City, Boise and San Francisco. The Dorians hired as many as sixty Chinese cooks over the years. Constance enjoyed her work, especially Christmas. She describes the employees' party, themes, decorations and skits.

Constance, a people watcher with a sense of humor, started to make humorous notes about customers and staff as she sat at the reception desk. She was encouraged by everyone who read her notes to have them printed. A friend, Bill Carson, who played music at the hotel, offered to make a few sketches to scatter through the book. The

booklet, *The Hotel and Me*, was published and sold at the counter and given to their friends.

Constance was active in the Battle Mountain Business and Professional Women's Club for thirty years, serving as president three times. In her retirement, Constance does lots of canning, enjoys playing the piano for her own pleasure and reading her collection of books.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Program, interviewing Constance Dorian at her home, 270 East Second, Battle Mountain, Nevada. The date is August 21, 1993.

Good morning Constance Dorian. I'm happy to be here to interview you. I just finished an interview with your husband Henry, but we need you to fill in a lot of things from your life here. First I want you to give me your full name, where you were born, and when.

Constance Dorian: My name is Constance L. Dorian, and I'm from California. I was born in Sacramento, April 9, 1918.

Since we're concentrating on Lander County, we're not going to do a whole lot of your early life. But I would like to know a little bit about where you spent your childhood, and where you lived until you went through high school—just very briefly.

Oh, in California, in Sacramento County. The Natomas Dredging Company had houses and my parents were active in the Natomas Dredging Company.

Your parents, both your mother and father?

My mother, my uncle, and that was it. I had no brothers and no sisters.

When you say they were "active in it," what do you mean?

They worked in the office. My mother was purchasing agent for the Natomas Dredging Company at that time. And then I would work on inventories, warehouse inventories, and work in *her* place when she was on vacation. And we lived just two blocks from the main Natomas Dredging Company office.

How old were you when you started to work there?

Sixteen.

And when you were going through high school, were you developing certain interests that pointed to what you would be doing later?

No. I was probably interested in office work, working in a big beautiful office with a big window and a big desk.

Okay, so there you were. You were all set. Now, did you meet your husband there at the mine?

Yes. When he was working for the Natomas Company, he did the testing, drilling and testing of the gold ore and he lived in what they called a boarding house for the men that worked there, that lived there and I met him when I saw him in the boarding house.

Were you attracted?

Yes.

Was it a two way attraction?

I think so.

Did you start dating there?

Well I had been to business school after that.

Where was that?

That was in Sacramento. And then I worked for the state in the School Department earthquake-proofing the schools. And I worked for different engineers in that office, and I worked at several other places in Sacramento proper and made lots of friends there. And then I came back out and.

Came back out where?

Out to Natomas. See Natomas is not the town on the map. It's a camp. Like Copper Canyon is not on a map.

Where's it near?

It's near Folsom and we have the Folsom Prison, was right above Folsom.

Now during that period, during that interim, did you see Mr. Dorian at all after your first meeting while you were going off to Sacramento? Did he see you?

I suppose we were dating. Well, he was working in the shops, too.

What shops?

The Natomas Company shops, what they call "shops." There's pictures in those books.

But what I'm trying to find out is you said you went away from the camp, from the mining to go to college and you were working other places.

Oh I always lived at home.

You would go back to Natomas?

Yes.

Is that not far from Sacramento?

It's twenty miles.

Oh, so you still lived at Natomas?

Yes.

And then you would be seeing each other?

Yes.

How long did you go together before you married?

I guess a couple of years.

When did you marry?

1940.

How old were you then?

Let's see, I don't know, I think he was twenty-two and I was twenty-one—I'm not sure of the [chuckles] ages.

Did you follow him around on all the excursions where he worked? or where did you live after you married?

No, we lived in a little place called Mills Junction which is not on the map, and it's between Folsom and Sacramento.

When did you come to Nevada? both of you and your son. Wait, when was your son born?

In 1950.

Oh, that's quite a long time after you married.

Well, he's an adopted son.

Oh, that's interesting.

So we came up in the fifties and I went to work with my husband in fifty-five.

I want to talk to you first when you first came to Copper Canyon. You came with him to Copper Canyon, you and your son. Tell me what the area looked like to you coming from California, the Sacramento area, although you lived in small places, try and think back and describe what you saw when you first came.

Well I wasn't too impressed with the country because I wasn't [chuckles] associated with any desert country. Where I lived was just *country* country and there was railroads and there was trees and there was rock piles and coyotes, and it was just *country* country, but up here it was like the end of the world to me. And we lived out at the dredge camp at Copper Canyon for a couple of years and had a siege of crickets and it didn't help my impressions very much. Got crickets up in the windows and across the lawn and one cricket ate another cricket and they were just a deluge in this country.

Were you ready to flee back to Sacramento?

Yeah, I was ready to go anyplace I think.

What was the housing like? Where did you live in?

It was a nice home. The houses were put up by the mining company out there.

What did they look like?

Well, let's see, they had one big living room, two bedrooms, kitchen, a little sun porch. They were nice little homes.

Were they furnished?

No.

Did you have your furniture shipped out?

No, we just got furniture that we brought up from California—chairs.

Oh, you bought there, you bought the furniture in California.

Yeah. The house at Mills [Junction] was furnished and then we came up here and bought a few pieces I guess. I don't remember that far back.

Do you know where you bought them? There were no furniture stores here were there?

No, I guess we brought it with us or through the catalog or something.

So now what was your life like at Copper Canyon? I know your husband was busy working, but what was your life like?

Well like I say, I went to work almost as soon as I came up here.

At Copper Canyon?

No, at the hotel where he was leasing it.

Yeah but you didn't lease it when he first went to Copper Canyon—he worked a couple years

at the mine. You were living at Copper Canyon and you didn't have the club.

No, I just stayed out there with the kids.

So tell me what your life was like there while you were living at Copper Canyon while he was working. What was it like, how many families, did you make friends, how did you spend your time, did you come in to Battle Mountain? Describe your life a little bit.

We used to come into Battle Mountain on Saturday nights and get groceries and go back out, or we'd have dinner or we'd see a show and go back out to the camp. And we lived out there for a couple of years like he said.

But during the week when you were there, you were there with your son. What was it like? Do you remember?

Well I would work temporarily in the office, they had an office building there.

Okay, at Copper Canyon?

Yes.

And was your little boy in school?

Yes, he was in high school, or in grammar school and high school both.

But when you first came to Copper Canyon, he was eleven or twelve?

Yeah, he was in grammar school.

What was the school like? Where did he go to school?

He went to school at the Lander County Schools.

He came into Battle Mountain?

Yeah.

And how did he get there?

I imagine with the school buses, I don't know.

They'd have a school bus pick up the kids?

Yeah, it's been a long time ago, fifty years ago. I'm a person that puts up a curtain, the facts don't mean that much to me. I live for today.

That's okay, but we're just gonna try to pick your brain a little because this is why we're doing the interview. So then you worked in an office a little bit there.

They had an office there.

Then when you came into Battle Mountain, you came to live in Battle Mountain? Right?

Yes.

Now tell me a little bit when you first came into Battle Mountain.

We lived in a little house across the tracks here. It was kind of a small house. We lived there for a little while and then he was looking for a nicer place after he decided to lease the hotel and looking for a nicer place for me, so he came home one day and said he bought this house.

You mean sight unseen, you didn't see it?

No.

It was a surprise?

Yes.

Were you happy?

Well yes. We've done a lot to it in the inside. There's a lot we had to do to make it please me I guess.

Well when did you know that you were going to be staying in Battle Mountain, that it wasn't just temporary? When he leased the hotel, or when he bought it, when you both bought it?

I guess I always thought we'd get out of here sometime. [chuckles] We never did.

How did you feel when he leased the hotel? Were you in on that decision?

Oh, I don't know, I suppose so.

So then is that when you started to work at the hotel in the office?

Yes, in 1955 I started to work.

What were some of your responsibilities?

Well I used to get the payrolls out and service the public, rent rooms, and I had the cash register, and I took care of the meal tickets. They had a separate entity there with the waitresses and the chef and cooks, but they were all on the payroll so I had payrolls to do.

You worked full-time.

Yes, I did. I worked eight to four a lot of years ago, and then I cut it down to shorter hours. In 1985 I had to quit.

Now let's go back a little. You mentioned the hotel. How many rooms were there?

There's still the same amount of rooms, about twenty rooms.

And who were usually the people who rented the rooms?

Well the cooks had some of them, the dishwashers had some, the janitors had some. There were free rooms given to these employees.

Well that's interesting, no one told me that. Was that part of the enticement of the job, free housing?

It was part of the agreement when you hired these people.

Were most of these people from away from Battle Mountain so they needed some housing?

Well a lot of the waitresses and things were local, but the cooks mostly came out of a lot of the agencies like Salt Lake or Boise or maybe something like that.

Would they be single people?

And we had a lot of Chinese people at one time too. Chinese cooks.

And where would they come from?

San Francisco.

Oh, how interesting. And would they come alone or with a spouse?

No, they usually were just by themselves.

Would they stay very long?

Some of them would, yeah. They'd come up on the bus from San Francisco.

And then have a room in your hotel?

Yeah.

Were there enough of them so they had friends with each other or did they live a kind of isolated life, do you know?

Well they were all on different shifts so I don't know. They all came separately, because you use a chef and then maybe you use two cooks under him, so you don't have that many cooks in your place. But in a period of time, we had as many as sixty-some odd Chinese cooks that we hired over the years.

That's interesting. Well certainly your Nevada Club gave employment to many, many people. Now who would rent the other rooms? tourists? or miners?

Well, usually tourists. And like I say, part of the rooms were taken up with the janitor, and with the cooks, and with the dishwasher—if they weren't a local dishwasher, then he'd have a room too.

So you had a busy time. Did you mainly stay back in the office?

The office was right in front, and then there was more office room then, than there

is now. It's mostly a counting room, and things that are geared to the new slots that came in over the years. So they have a regular counting room. One day a week they count all the machines and various things that are associated with gaming. So I did have more office space at that time. And a lot of work I do at home too. I bring it home and do.

Oh my, so you put in long word days and hours. I was commenting how exceptional the restaurant part is. I don't much about the other parts, but that's usually the place I eat because I think it's the best food in town. Tell me how you both started to plan what the menus would be. Did you pick up on what it was when you bought it? Did you start to create your own?

No, I can't remember that far back. Usually that's why he'd have a chef, because they'd take care of what they want, but he overlooked everything they bought or if they wasted something.

He set the standards? Was he the one who set the standards for the good food and meals, and the way it was cooked?

Uh-huh.

Did you eat there, did you both eat your meals there?

No, I cooked at home.

You'd come home and cook? [laughs]

Yeah, or I cooked before I went to work.

Goodness, you were a busy one. [laughs] Now how many years did you work there like that taking care of all the accounting?

Well from 1955 to 1985, figure that one out.

Oh my, thirty years. So your life was pretty much absorbed just in work.

Just in the hotel.

In the hotel and the restaurant—the whole complex. What were some of your favorite parts of working there? Did you enjoy any specific areas? Did you enjoy the whole thing? Did you have a lot of worries? What was it like?

I enjoyed my work most of the time. People would just leave me alone and I'd do it. But I seemed to enjoy the holiday times when we could decorate and we usually gave a employees' party at the holiday time.

You talking about Christmas?

Yes.

Okay, tell me would it would be like.

Well, usually we'd pick a day in December that's employees' night so the hotel pays for all the buffet and all that they need and then they draw names to exchange gifts. And it used to be for a long time I'd put on little skits about ten or fifteen-minute skits and I could get maybe four or five employees to help me, otherwise it wasn't a big thing, it was just a little thing.

So you have a creative mind.

In that way I did, yeah. And one time it would be Hawaiian, the next time it would be Spanish and one time it would be something else, and I would try to decorate the dining

room with the decorations and favors and all to tone into what it was.

And you would do that?

Yeah.

So you're very artistic. What fun! Do you have any photographs in your albums about those holidays? You must.

Oh yeah, I got a whole book of them. [laughs]

Okay, you be sure to get me some because that's really unique and I'll put that in your interview. So that was kind of fun. Did you, on the whole, enjoy the staff there? Were they able to get people that were interesting and congenial?

Yeah, we didn't have any problems at all, but it was hard to get any of'em to stand up and do something. We used to use phonograph records and project them through the mike to make the music and we'd put on little dance skits.

Did they bring their families, or was it just for staff?

No, just husband and wife.

Did you give them little gifts for Christmas?

CD. Well they always got bonuses.

Oh, that's better!

They got bonuses clear up to now. They still get bonuses, but the bonuses were small then and they got bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

Sounds like you were very good bosses.

I think most of them will say we were.

Are there any things that you can tell me during that period? I know there were very slow times in the winter, and busier when there were miners. Anything to share that's a little exceptional or interesting?

No, I think that when they were planning the freeway around town, and when the freeway went in, I think business slowed up to a point. I think it did that with all the small towns. But like my husband said, everything was just up and down for a little while and we had to borrow and mortgage our home and a lot of different things to make ends meet, but times change and they go on with the times and I would say it was just on a par right now. I don't think it's any big boom except it is for a lot of people—the mining, it's a new type of mining. And some of these people around here are old-time miners, but they work as long as they can work.

And now when you first came, of course you were reluctant about Battle Mountain. How did you feel once you had the Nevada Club and were an important part of the community? Did you begin to change and feel at home? or will you always have your heart somewhere else?

Oh I guess my heart was always someplace else, but the only time I mixed with people was when I joined the Club because we mostly kept to ourselves. He was more the outspoken and belonged to a lot of different things.

Now when you say "belonged to the Club" tell me what the Club is.

The Club was the Battle Mountain Business and Professional Women's Club.

When did you join that?

I can't tell you that. I was in the club thirty years too. It wasn't long after I started working.

So it would be like late fifties or early sixties?

Yeah, it was the late fifties.

Tell me what the organization was like then, how many women there were and what it was like.

Oh, there was probably about twenty women.

That many?

Yeah, they just tried to start a club. Maybe there wasn't that many really, I can't remember. I know I was President three times, and one of the times that I was President, we had forty members, so we considered that a good membership for there. And then it kept dwindling down over the years, and here about three years ago, we couldn't hold our charter, we didn't have enough members, so we gave the charter up and we started a new club.

Now I want to ask several questions. What kind of business and professional women—what were some of their businesses and professions?

Well, there was a doctor's wife, and there was a couple from the bank and there was some of the teachers.

So it could be wives of professionals, they didn't have to be professional?

Well they were professional in their line of work, but they were teachers.

Yeah but you said the wives of doctors.

Well, she was a nurse.

Oh, okay, I don't want to know about the husbands, I want to know what the women did. Like I know what you did, and one was a teacher, one a nurse.

Well there were several teachers.

Store owners?

Well there wasn't many stores there at the time—in fact, there wasn't *any* that I know of when I first started. Or she might have worked for the D.A. (district attorney) or she might have worked for the County. Different professions.

And all ages apparently?

Yes.

Now what did you do at your meetings, what was your goal?

Well a portion of our dues always had to go back to national.

Oh, so there's a national organization?

Yes, in Washington, D.C., and they have clubs all over and there's seventeen clubs in the State of Nevada I think, but a lot of them had disbanded, like I say we did. But we would have bake sales and we'd have fashion shows and rock and hobby shows.

What would you do with the money that you made?

Well it was usually to help the people, or we gave scholarships.

Scholarships for girls to go into the business and professional world?

No, just high school girls that wanted to go anyplace.

But for girls?

Yes.

Good.

And then we opened it to boys later on.

Would it be local scholarships here in Battle Mountain area?

Yes.

Oh, how wonderful.

Now we're still giving the scholarships.

Wonderful, and how often would you meet?

We met twice a month.

Would they be lunch meetings?

Once for business and once for dinner in the evening.

How did it change over the years as the community changed? What kind of changes of people who were members and of the number of members?

Well they were hesitant to join, a lot of 'em, there were a lot of people we could have gotten, but they didn't seem to want to join a club. I wasn't too keen on it either, but I

thought it was good for me and I worked it in with my work.

Were there any women of the other ethnic groups in this organization, like any of the Indian or Mexican women?

We had a couple of Indian girls.

You showed me an article about an Indian woman in your organization that you were going to share with us. You want to tell us about her?

Well, she was a member of our club for many years and she graduated from the Battle Mountain schools and she was club president a time or two, and then she went in to be installed as state president.

Do you know what tribe she was from?

The Shoshone Paiute, I think—a Shoshone/Paiute combination. I don't know just exactly. And she was from a big family. She had a younger sister that was working at the hotel as a waitress and she joined the club so there was two of them. We honored Dottie Wilson quite a bit. We were proud of her and so we had installations and parties. Our main theme, I guess, was scholarships

Was she a recipient of a scholarship when she was younger?

No, I don't think so. She was just [chuckles] naturally smart.

What was her work?

She had been working for the district attorney's office and then she went to work for the County in the Police Department.

That's nice to hear. Now that organization—you were president twice did you say?

I was president three times of the club over the years.

Oh my.

But I was in the club about thirty years I think, all told.

Did you go to some of the conventions out of town?

I went to a lot of conventions—almost all of them, I guess. And they were held like in Reno, Fallon, Las Vegas, Elko, Winnemucca.

So that kept you pretty busy. Did you belong to any other organizations?

No, that was the only one that I put a lot of time into.

It sounds like you did, and that you contributed a lot. Now I want to go back and find out a little bit about your son. Did he go through schools here and graduate from high school here in Battle Mountain?

Yes, he did, and a little later he went into the service—he never went overseas. And then when he come out of that, why then he worked for us for a long time and then he met a girl, married her and now he's got a family of his own.

Now when you say he worked for you, specifically what was his job, or what kind of work did he do at the hotel?

I don't know. He's done everything just like my husband has: tended bar. He doesn't like to deal.

Did he start to work full time at the club?

No, just part-time. Before that, he worked for some mining companies around here.

And where did he meet his wife? Was she local?

Yes, uh-huh.

And do you know when they got married?

About twenty-five years ago I guess, I don't know.

Do they have children?

Yes, they've got a girl, she's almost twenty and two boys that he adopted—her two little boys he adopted.

Now they all live here in Battle Mountain?

No, they're scattered around. A couple of 'em are in Las Vegas.

But your son and his wife live here?

Yes.

So you have family. And I understand he's manager now of the Nevada Club.

Uh-huh.

So what is your life like now? How do you spend your time?

How do I spend my time?

Do you go to the [Nevada] Club?

In the home. No, not since 1985. I had to quit, I had pneumonia and I had different things happen to me.

Your health?

Yes, healthwise, and so I quit and I figured thirty years was enough.

I'll say! [chuckles] What do you enjoy the most in your life?

Right now?

Yeah.

I like to go fishing, but there's no water around here.

Oh, you're a fisherwoman! [chuckles] Were you always? Did you always like to fish?

No, I never did much of that when I was growing up. I used to like to dance, but my husband doesn't like to dance.

Well, could you dance with someone else at the Club?

I did most of that at the parties, yeah.

Oh, that's fun. And did you learn to fish with your husband here in the Battle Mountain area?

No, up in Elko in one of the reservoirs up there. But I like it, it's fun.

Uh-huh, out in the outdoors. And do you have much of a social life here? Do you have friends?

No, I don't leave the house much. I do lots of canning and I have my piano and my books.

Oh, you play the piano?

Yeah, for my own pleasure. And I have lots of books and I can find plenty to do in the house.

So you're glad to not have to rush out and work every day?

Yes.

Good. Did you finally feel like you were a part of Battle Mountain, that that was your home?

No, not especially. [chuckles] I had a nice place to live. We've taken lots of trips over the years. We worked for a long time before we decided to take a vacation, then when we did, we took one vacation a year, and so we've been all over.

Did you go back to California a lot, back to your family?

I had no family there but my mother, and she passed away in the forties or fifties, I can't remember.

So you didn't have any specific reason to go back?

No, just a friend here and there: one in Sacramento that I went to school with and worked with in the State offices. And some friends of my mother's that lived on the river, and so there wasn't a lot of friends. Hank knows everybody in the state, but I don't know.

Well he's been so active in organizations and you have a lovely home. Is there anything else about the Nevada Hotel and Club that would add to what you have already told me and that your husband has told me? Did your women's club meet in the Nevada Club, did they ever meet there?

Yes we did.

Did they meet there all the time or occasionally?

Yeah, we used to meet there and we've had two conventions here in Battle Mountain.

Did they use the Nevada Club?

Well, they used both clubs then.

So it's been kind of the center of the activity of what goes on here.

A lot of the service clubs met there and they still do.

Is there anything else that you want to share with us before we end the interview?

I don't know that much, because since the town has grown, I'm not too familiar and I'm not working there. I'm not too familiar with the people because it's grown to that extent.

No, I mean just at the club in your life, not the town. Just anything else from the club.

I've had too much sickness...I can remember one funny thing. It wasn't exactly anything that makes the Nevada Hotel stand out, but when I was at the desk there, I'd watch people because I'm a people watcher

I guess and so I wrote a funny little book, and one night I was sitting on the stool there just writing away and one of the customers was having coffee at the counter and he said, "You're sure doing something interesting. What is it? You had your head down there just goin' to it." I said, "Oh, I'm just makin' notes on people that come in and out of the hotel and writing about that." He said, "Do you mind if I read it?" And he read it and he just thought it was the cutest thing and he said, "What are you gonna do with it?" and I said, "Well, if I can get enough words I'd probably get it printed but I'm havin' a heck of a time gettin' enough words," because I'd pick out the janitors and the cooks and the dealers, the bartenders, the waitresses, the maids, the customers, some of the customers that came in and little funny things that at the time they struck me funny [laughs] but of course now I don't think so much of it. But everybody that saw it got a kick out of it.

I'd love to see a copy.

Well I'll show you one. I think I've got one.

So you're very creative. Was it published or printed?

It was printed but it wasn't put out any place. [laughs] They sold 'em there at the counter and I'd give 'em to my friends most of the time.

You have to give me one to add to your interview.

They're kind of fun. And it shows what people do, how people act around the slot machines. And of course I'm not too good at sketching...

Oh, did you sketch?

There's some sketches in it because we had some friends that were playing music there at the time, and this man said, "I'll make you a few sketches to scatter through the book." He took the pages and what he thought was worthwhile, he put sketches, and it's kinda cute. Everybody that's read it thinks it's kinda cute. It's just the silly side of me.

I'd like a copy to add because that and the parties that you gave were so creative, shows a side of you that I'd want to reveal in the interview so be sure you get me a copy. And I will want to borrow your scrapbook to copy a few things from it too.

We've had a pretty full life. I know we were talkin' the other day between us and said that most of our life was geared right to the hotel. So it has been. We have music every week or two-three times a month, depending on their contract.

Do you go there to listen?

Sometimes. Sometimes I go over and have dinner, but as a rule I don't get to hear a lot of 'em. They usually have something to say about 'em. They usually give us tapes and we can play 'em and pick 'em out, so he has a lot to do with choosing the type of music we have there.

I'll have to go over and listen, I haven't done that. Is that on the weekend?

It's all week. I don't know who's playing there right now.

Like there'd be some tonight?

They play Tuesday through Sunday.

I'll have to go over and hear that. I go and eat there almost every night. Well, you both have certainly contributed so much to this area through yourselves and the club and with your organization, and I'm just delighted that you were able to share that with us and I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project.

Well, I hope I helped a little. [chuckles]

You did, and it's been a delightful pleasure to meet you. This is the end of the interview.

CONSTANCE DORIAN PHOTOGRAPHS



CONSTANCE DORIAN
AUGUST 21, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

CONSTANCE DORIAN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Constance Dorian Interview

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HENRY DORIAN**PREFACE**

Henry Dorian, born in California in 1917, worked with the Natomas Gold Dredging Company in California, and moved with the company to Copper Canyon in 1952 as resident engineer and dredge master. He, his wife and son lived in a company house at Copper Canyon. When the mine closed down three years later, they moved into Battle Mountain.

An opportunity to lease the Nevada Hotel was offered to him by Marion Fisher. The Altenburg family owned and operated it for eighty-seven years when their son-in-law, Marion Fisher, took over the management. The Dorians leased it for two years, not knowing anything about the business. His wife, a graduate accountant, did the accounting and office work while he started tending bar and running the gambling tables. When the lease was up Mr. Fisher offered to sell them the hotel, and they decided to get a loan.

Mining had started to pick up in the region, and business started to improve. They

were able to begin repairing and remodeling the hotel, restaurant and bar. They also bought a well-built sixty-five-year-old house, and became permanent residents of Battle Mountain.

Mr. Dorian had several successful turquoise mines in the region. He sold the turquoise to buyers all over the country and engaged Indians to make the jewelry he still sells in his hotel.

Their son now manages the hotel, but Henry goes there every morning for a couple of hours, reads the newspaper, then goes home for breakfast, some yard work, fishing or hunting. Then he's back at the hotel every morning from one to two o'clock to close the games down. He hires the help and even fills in as dealer when needed.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Henry Dorian at his home 270

East Second, Battle Mountain, Nevada, August 21, 1993.

Mr. Dorian, I'm so pleased that you agreed to let us interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you please tell us your full name?

Henry Dorian: My name is Henry Edward Dorian.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in 1917 in Lone, California.

How long did you live in Lone, California?

Oh, I don't recall. I left there early in life, when I was a child, and moved to the foothill country of California, between Jackson and Sacramento, over in the mining district.

Was that because your father was in mining?

No, he wasn't, he was in ranching at that time. But I grew up in this area, and attended grade school at Michigan Bar, which was a one-room schoolhouse, six or eight pupils. Junior high school in Sacramento, California. Then I completed high school in Elk Grove, California.

When you were going through high school, did you start to develop specific interests that led you to what you did later in life?

No, I really didn't. At that time it didn't seem like I knew what I wanted to do. I just started working at public works, and kind of leaned toward mining, I think.

When did you have your first experience actually working in mining?

With the Natomas Gold Dredging Company in California. I worked for them fifteen years.

What kind of work?

Well, I was in exploration, mostly. Traveled quite a bit, you know, in California and Oregon and Nevada and New Mexico and South America and Mexico. You know, just different places, exploring the possibilities for gold dredging and mining.

Did you learn on the job?

Yes, I did.

Now, what brought you to Nevada?

I came here with a gold dredging operation out at Copper Canyon. I was resident engineer and dredge master there on that project for about three or four years.

What year was that?

I moved my family up here in 1952. I worked at this operation until 1955, and then I branched off into the hotel business.

I want to take you back a little bit, and tell me who you married, and when and where.

I married Constance Murphy, a pretty good-lookin' girl in California [both chuckle] In Folsom, California.

What year?

We were married in 1940.

And you said family, did you have children?

We have one son.

And when you came, how old was your son?

When we came up here?

When you came to Copper Canyon.

He was about twelve years old. Is that correct, Hon? [wife confirms] About twelve years old.

Now, when you first arrived in 1952, describe to me your first encounter, what the Battle Mountain area looked like.

My first encounter was, I believe, in about 1950. I came in on an exploration job for this particular operation, and I had been working in Mexico, and I came from Mexico up here for a short duration. It didn't look like much when I first came here—in fact, I think I came here for two weeks, and I was hoping it'd go by [chuckles] rather quickly, because [laughs] it looked like a pretty desolate place to me.

What was here compared to today?

There were, at that time, I think there were about six hundred people here. A lot of them were pretty old residents, you know. I won't say they weren't friendly, but they didn't cotton to newcomers too much. Seemed like there was a little kind of a family affair or something on that order. I don't say it was family, but I mean it was residents that had [been] born and raised and grown up here, and I think they pretty much had control of the town, I would say.

What was here as far as buildings or stores on the main street?

Well, there was the Nevada Hotel, which I own today—or we own, my wife and I. Then there was the post office on the main street. Swackhamers had a store on the main street. The Owl Club was a bar at that time, just a bar. I believe there was a drug store on the main street. Maybe there were two bars on the main street. [laughter]

And then tell me, was the railroad in action when you came? either the one to Austin or the one that was the main train, the freight and some passenger.

The Austin short line, or the Central Nevada was not in operation when I came here. Of course the Southern Pacific tracks have been here for eons, and they were here. And the Western Pacific, of course, was over five miles on the other side. Both the WP and the SP used the Southern Pacific track going west, and used the WP tracks going east. It was split track, but both companies used it. So we had traffic just one way here.

Just one way?

Yes, going west.

I see. Now was there much automobile traffic on that road?

On the main highway here?

Uh-huh.

There was considerable traffic, because it was the main artery east and west, of course, and there was no freeway at that time. The highway ran right by my front door. So there was considerable traffic—in the summertime, especially.

Now when you moved your family here to work at Copper Canyon, where did you create your first home? What structure, and where?

I was working for the Natomas Gold Dredging Company out of California, and they erected some residences out here for their employees, about twenty miles south of town here, where their operation was. So we had one of those houses out there, a company house.

I have several questions. How long did you work there in Copper Canyon, and what work did you do there?

I was a resident engineer there, and dredge master—pretty well up on the echelon—management, you might say. I worked there, I think, about three years.

How big was the mining company, how many families and workers lived there? Tell me a little more about it.

I think there were about twenty residences there. And the operation employed about forty to forty-five people. We had to generate our own power out there, because there was no power supply here at that time. I think there was only two wires between here and Winnemucca and the town. [chuckles] So we built a 1,500 KVA steam plant there and generated our own power. They hauled crude oil in, and it was fired with crude oil, steam plant.

Now where did these workers come from? Did they bring some of them? did they hire some locally?

They hired quite a few of them locally, and then at that time there was always people in

that field with other companies that came in, that had followed that type of work most of their lives.

Now, you said about three years. Tell me what happened after the three years.

Well, the operation closed down. It was not profitable. The project was done before the Second World War, so it lay dormant during the war, and then they built the operation up, built the dredge and the power plant and everything after the war, and started the operation. But in the meantime, the price of materials and wages and everything had escalated and it just wasn't profitable any more. So they closed down, and I had a son in school here. And so I moved into town. We rented a little house over on the north side of the tracks here, and let the boy continue on in school. In the meantime I just kind of did odd jobs around, a little surveying and one thing and another, and became acquainted with the man that owned the Nevada Hotel. He wanted to get out of the business, I guess, so he talked me into leasing it for two years.

Who was that man?

Mr. Marion Fisher. He and the Altenburg estate owned the hotel. Altenburgs were old settlers here, as you probably know. So we leased it for two years. I didn't know anything about the business. My wife is a graduate accountant. I started tending bar and my wife worked in the office and did the bookwork and the accounting and one thing and another. As I say, we were green and didn't know anything about the gambling business, and I was running the "21" tables and the crap tables. People were kind of taking advantage of me, I believe, you know, money-wise. [laughter] But anyway, through it all, we came

out kind of half-way right, and was thinking about getting out of here, really, when the lease was up. But Mr. Fisher being a kind of a convincing individual, said, "I'd like to sell you the place." Well, we didn't have any money to speak of, so we talked it over and I don't think Connie, my wife, was tickled to death here—it wasn't really a place for a woman, you know—no facilities, no stores, just hard country. But anyway, we decided to take a whack at it, so what little money we had, we gave it to Mr. Fisher and went and got a loan at the bank. [chuckles] That's the way it went! [laughs]

Now I want to know when you first leased it and when you bought it, what did it consist of then?

Well, the structure was pretty much the same as it is now. I mean, a concrete building and it's kind of sandwiched in between other buildings, so there wasn't much place to go except up. But anyway, it was pretty slow times. In the wintertime here you might sit over there for eight hours and never see a car go by—snow and cold. This was in 1955. We leased it on New Year's Day, and we bought it two years later. Anyway, in the meantime, mining had started to picking up mound here—barite mining, particularly, you know. And they built a mill here in town, and things started to stirring around a little bit and business improved. The old place was pretty well run down, to be truthful with you: the roof was gone, the floors were gone, a lot of things were bad—you know, electrical system, plumbing system, all that. So we [sigh] started repairing on that, and we kind of went along and remodeled as we went along, and got it up to where it is today, which isn't a bad-looking place. It's old, but it's pretty well kept.

So you still own it?

Yes.

Did it have that wonderful restaurant in the early days?

It had a restaurant, it always had a restaurant. Of course we've completely remodeled the restaurant and the bar and everything, and upstairs to a certain extent. There's only so much you can do to a walk-up hotel. We had a lot of business from ranchers. And I don't know, I guess people kind of liked us, because we did enjoy a pretty good business in those first years, and made a little money. We bought this house. Soon after we bought the hotel, we bought this home here from Mr. Frank Eaton who owned the Owl Club at that time and was killed up on the highway here in an accident, and his wife sold us this home. It's a sixty-five-year-old house, but it's well-built. So we've enjoyed it.

Now I want to get back to the Nevada Club and a little bit of information about the gambling. When you leased and purchased it, were the gambling machines in there, and were those leased or owned? How does that work?

Well, when I bought the building, at that time they had about fifteen machines and the machines went with it. I bought the whole shebang. [laughs] Of course we added more as the business required. We kept adding.

Now, almost everyone I interview at some point worked at the Nevada Club or Nevada Hotel, so I know it gave a lot of employment to people, a lot of women who needed to work part-time. Now, does all of your help come locally?

Pretty much. We have a nucleus of help that's been there for quite a few years, you know. Then we hire a lot of—oh, a man will

come in and go to work in the mines and his wife will want to work—people like that. We hire quite a few women, as you probably noticed. And cooks and chefs, they come and go pretty readily, you know. They're not really long stayers. [chuckles] We have hired more people than we have now. We used to run more games—we had roulette wheels and crap tables and “21” tables, but things have kind of changed, and people are more inclined to play slot machines now. So we got more slot machines and less table games. We only have one “21” game now.

Now, how long did you and Constance—and I'm going to be interviewing Constance on her part, which will be different from yours—how long did you actually work there, or do you still work there?

Well, I mess around there! [laughs] My son is manager. He's been with me about fifteen years, I guess. You know, by the dates, I've been there pretty near forty years now. So he does a good job, but I still pay the bills. [chuckles]

I think you have the best restaurant in town. I know when I stay here, I eat there practically every night. I am amazed, and I want to ask a little about that—the menus are so varied, everything is so deliciously prepared and so reasonable. Tell me who is responsible for that.

Well, I think Connie and I have to take some responsibility with it. And my son, of course. He's on top of things over there. But I've always been cranky about the restaurant—I've always bought the very best of food and I like to have people prepare it. It doesn't make any difference how good of food you buy, if you don't have it prepared properly, you've wasted your money.

Now I have a couple of questions to ask, because some of the things I enjoy so much, like last night, is so much of the fresh fish, like the trout and so on. Where are the supplies, where do they all come from?

The trout come out of Idaho. There's a big trout factory there on the Snake River. I can't think of the name of the town, but Thousand Springs is the area it's in. All our trout comes from there. They come in fast frozen. They've been on TV with their process. It's a nice process, and their fish is good. Then we buy some fish out of Reno, which comes in by plane, pretty fresh fish. Sometimes I think it's fresher than what you get at Fisherman's Wharf! [laughs]

And what about all the other types of food: your fresh vegetables and other things that you prepare there?

We have purveyors that come in from Utah and California: Bonanza comes in from California. I can't think of the name of the purveyor from Utah. We kind of buy from different ones. We get pretty nice vegetables. We have to pay more than most people do up here, you know, being out of the mainstream.

Now, over the period of years, through your business, you would observe the ups and downs of the population, economy, and travelers. I'd like to ask you several questions: first, periods of booms and decline, and then I want to move into the highway.

Okay, what would you like to know?

First, were there periods from the fifties up until now when there would be a burst of activity because of new mining or new business, and the slow times, besides the winter? What kind of changes did you see?

We've seen quite a few changes, and our economy in our particular line of business is directly related to the activity in mining here, mostly. So we have had ups and downs in the mining industry, and we seem to have them along with them. Our tourist trade, when the highway was going right by the place, we enjoyed quite a nice business in the summer, from the tourists going by. But now, when the freeway bypasses us, we don't get much of that. Hard to get people off of that freeway.

Especially with the competition of Winnemucca and Elko.

Right.

Was there any opportunity for people like you to fight to have it go through the town instead of bypass?

Yeah, but you're fighting an uphill game there. [chuckles] You can't fight progress! We fought, of course, and we wanted it closer to town, and we wanted different things, and we had meetings and meetings and meetings, but when it was all said and done, I think it was pretty well designed a long ways off somewhere, where it would go, and that's the way it went.

You say mainly the mining. I go in the restaurant and see people I've interviewed eating there. It seems a lot of locals eat there too, right?

Yes, as I said before, we've enjoyed a good local business.

Now with the Owl Club development, what kind of competition was carried on between two, right on the same block?

[chuckles] Well, for years the Owl Club was owned by Mr. Hinman, you know, Butch

Hinman, a good friend of mine. We worked quite closely together. I mean, we kind of got together on our prices and one thing and another. We didn't have any problems. I mean, somebody would get mad at the Owl Club and come [chuckles] to my place, or vice ver But I think we're very agreeable competitors. We got along very nicely. But he sold it to a corporation in Reno. I can't think of the name of it. They're still operating there in Reno. They came in and remodeled and put it on a little higher echelon, I guess, and they operated there for four or five years, and then they sold it out to this Jackpot Incorporated, which is a slot machine company.

Oh, I didn't know that.

They bought it about three years ago, I guess. So then they remodeled again, and everybody does things a little different, you know. But I don't have the close personal contact that I had when Mr. Hinman was there. I see the people, and they do what they feel like and I do what I feel like, and we don't have any agreements between us as to... "Dog eat dog" thing, I guess you could say. [laughs]

Also, I noticed, because the very first time I came on my first business trip here, there was a Chamber of Commerce social in the back, and I was invited to talk to them. And so the Nevada Club, it seems, is like the center of activities here? Is that right?

I like to think it is. We've had the Lions Club for forty years, and the Rod and Gun Club, and different organizations meet there. We enjoy their business. We've had some rough years, it hasn't been all downhill. [chuckles]

Was there ever a time where it was so slow that you thought, "Let's get out of it"?

Yes, there's been a time or two like that. There was times there in the early years after we purchased it that we had to mortgage the house and the car and everything to pay the help. In winter months when everything was slow, borrow \$15,000-\$20,000 at the bank and then pay it back in the summertime, which we were fortunate in being able to do it. A few years like that, and you feel like packing your suitcase! [laughs]

I'll be asking Connie about her part of her life here, but now I want to ask you, because looking at the scrapbook, you became like a leader, and rather dynamic in many organizations. So first I want to ask you to start with telling me which organizations—first your favorite ones—and kind of tell me what the organization did and your role in it—because it seems that took a lot of your time, contributing to this community.

Well, first, even before I bought the hotel, when I was working at the mine, I joined the Lions Club in the town here, and was active in that. Then after I got into the hotel business, I was on the State Board of Economic Development for a few years. And I was President of the Chamber of Commerce two or three times, and President of the Lions Club. Then I got elected Fish and Game Commissioner for Lander County. It was a state office. I served fifteen years on there. The last four years I was Chairman of the Board of the State Fish and Game Commission. Then I resigned. When I first went on the Board, we dealt with sportsmen and ranchers, and it was quite interesting. It was a seventeen-man Board when I first went on—one from each county. And then the Legislature changed it down to a nine-man Board, and that's what it is today, and they're appointed by the Governor. We were elected by the counties at the time that I went on the Board. So as I say, I enjoyed

it when our meetings pertained mostly to fish and game matters and the range and such as this. But along came the environmentalists, and they become more active all the time and taking up more of your time with chickadees and pup fish and little things that didn't really—in *my* mind, it didn't really belong with the Fish and Game Commission. I thought that was a sportsmen's organization. So it got to where we could do our business in one day a month or something like this. But finally it got to where it was taking two or three days. It got to taking more and more time and I was taking more time away from my business, and it was not a paying job—all you got was per diem and mileage, you know. And so I resigned from that.

Where were the meetings held?

We held most of our meetings in Reno, because that's where the head office of the State Fish and Game...But occasionally we went out, to like Ely, and one meeting a year we always held in Las Vegas. Sometimes we'd go to Ely and Elko and different places, you know, and try to be represented pretty much statewide.

Tell us some of the things that you feel good about that you participated in during that period on the Board.

Well, I participated in a lot of activities and a lot of changes, no doubt, but you understand it wasn't just me. I mean, there were nine other members on the Board, and I have to give them as much credit as me for anything that might have transpired during that period. But I believe as a group that we brought the state along quite a ways in the management of the wildlife in the state. We're living in arid state here, you know, where we're subjected to

drought conditions. It isn't the best situated state for wildlife, really. It's kind of a bust and a boom type of thing, you know. We tried to manage the number of hunters and fishermen and tried to correlate them with the resource that was available. I think we accomplished that. Like anyone else that's been on the Board so long, I look now and I see a lot of things I think they're doing *wrong*, but I'm sure they're not. [laughter]

Let's move on to some other organizations that you talked about. I would like to know some of the goals of the organization, and some of the accomplishments.

Specifically what organizations? I think I mentioned most of them that I was affiliated with.

Yes, I want to go back to each of those and get a little more detail.

Well, the Lions Club, which is an age-old organization, I joined them and served twice as President and on different committees.

What kinds of projects under your leadership did they accomplish?

When I was President we put on the first rodeo here in town, and it's been a yearly event ever since. And that, I think, has been quite successful and created some recreation for the area. We put in a city park, which is still in operation. The trees are large ones now. We planted them all when they were little twigs.

Is that the one on the other side of the tracks?

Yes.

Where the Fourth of July celebrations are held?

Yes, that's right. So we initiated that. There's been many, many things, you know. I mean, the Lions are an organization to help the community. They become involved in phases of eye care for the people and poor people, and downtrodden and the weak, and [chuckles] all this type of thing. So I think during my tenure there—I'm a still a member, I'm a lifetime member, and I'm not as active as I used to be. I go to meetings and participate that way. That's about all I can tell you about the Lions Club. I was with the State Department of Economic Development. You're familiar with that, I'm sure.

Economic Development is just exactly what the word means: it's trying to do something to enhance the business and the growth of these small areas, trying to get industry into the state. We didn't get much [chuckles] in my area here, particularly, but in some areas they did. The director would contact different companies that might want to bring a plant into Nevada. But being out here in Central Nevada, you have a transportation problem. You're so far away from markets. Somebody come in and make shoes, he doesn't want to ship 'em four hundred miles to somebody to wear 'em! [laughs]

Now, was part of your role...I know that a lot of businesses move here, especially now because you have a much more conducive tax structure. Did you have anything to do with talking about the state taxes or business taxes, to encourage businesses to come?

We would send representatives to the Legislature, you know, on different bills, and do some lobbying in that respect. But it's been so long ago I've forgotten what they were. But I'm sure we must have done some good,

because the organization is still operating. I mean, they still have a Board of Economic Development, and I'm sure they have brought industry into the state.

Now you said for a while you were very active in the Chamber of Commerce. Tell me what years and a little bit about that.

[chuckles] I can't remember the years. I think I was twice President of the Chamber of Commerce, and I got my ears beat down a couple of times by trying to move the county seat from Austin to Battle Mountain. [laughs] I'm sure we accomplished *some* things. It was a kind of an on and off thing. It would be active for a while, and then everybody would quit coming and it would go down. As the economy went down, the Chamber of Commerce went down, and up and down. So I really can't relate too much of what might have happened during that period. And of course there was always the incorporation of the town, you know—people give that a lot of consideration. Other than that, I can't tell you too much.

Well, I'm interested, and I think it's a good time now to get into that move of the courthouse from Austin to Battle Mountain, because I'm interviewing in both areas, and I know what a difficult thing that was. I want to hear from you a little more about that: when it started and about the controversy and the final vote.

Well, it become quite bitter at times. Personally, I wasn't really in favor of moving the courthouse to Battle Mountain. At that particular time I couldn't really see any advantage to it. Austin was a little old town down there, kind of dying on the vine. That's about all they had there for a livelihood, was the courthouse. And they fought like the devil

to keep it. And of course I being President of the Chamber of Commerce, I had to work with the people that belonged to the Chamber. By a majority vote, of course, they wanted to move it up here. But I wasn't really completely active in that. I didn't quite see it. And even on the last one, when they did finally get it through and moved it, I still wasn't convinced. That's just the way I felt.

You mean there was no problem for more people traveling to Austin or staying over for meetings than there would be coming here?

Yes, there were, once a month. At that time, the town was quite small—it's small now, for that matter—but I mean, much smaller than it is now. And it wasn't all that great a thing. It'd take an hour to go down and an hour to come back. They only met once a month, or something like that. Of course there was business that transpired that people had to go to Austin. They had branch offices here. They had Deputy Assessor and Deputy this and that, here, where people could go. When it got right down to the nitty-gritty, why, they had to go to Austin. So I can see their point of it in that respect, but I just always felt a little sorry for the people in Austin—just the way it was.

They lost their bank.

Yeah, they lost their bank. So I mean, live and let live. You know, you gotta do that a little bit.

Did it affect like the miners and the businesses here? Would it be inconvenient for them if they had to go up and back? Was that one of the reasons?

I think it was one of the reasons, but there's always been a little tiff between Austin and

Battle Mountain for some reason or another. I mean, it started long before I came here, and they just referred to one another in not too pleasant terms, you know. [laughs] I'm sure, overall, when I look at it now, and the size of the two towns and the communities and the activities in the different places, that we're better off with the county offices here, because it is the center of population.

Well I know that I attend many Commissioners Meetings because they're the ones who hired me, and I am just amazed at the huge agenda and ail of the people. They meet twice a month, and sometimes I have to wait until two-thirty in the afternoon. So it seems like now—I don't know how it was then—that it's more massive than people who aren't sitting in, realize. And they come from all over the state.

Yeah, it is. Everything has grown, you know. We used to have three people on the police force here, and now we've got thirty-three!

Yes. And I know that a lot of people, when I go to give a report at the meeting, many have to stay over. So there's very few places in Austin to stay over. Maybe that's another reason.

Right. That's correct. As I say, I realize now that I was wrong, but I didn't really fight it. I just didn't work too hard for it. [chuckles]

It was emotional trauma.

An emotional thing.

Yes, sure.

I didn't have no relatives or any great friends or anything there—just looking at the situation I thought, "Well, leave 'em alone." [chuckles]

Now I need you to help me to tell me some of the things about Battle Mountain. Obviously you like it, you've stayed, you kept the business, you're living here now. I think it's a beautiful, wonderful area, when you get to know it. What kind of recreation—did you enjoy the area? did you do fishing and game hunting?

Fishing and hunting has been most of my life, as far as recreation goes. I've always had good hunting dogs and good hunting and fishing equipment, and I've done a lot of it.

Where did you, and where do you do that?

Well, I've hunted birds a lot in my lifetime. You know, chukar partridge is one of my favorite birds, and pheasants. We've enjoyed very good bird hunting here over the years, excellent.

What areas?

Well, within a twenty-five-mile radius of town. One of the things, we're feeling the effects of the ten-year drought, or whatever we had here, now, and our populations are down on the birds and the hunting isn't good at all. The reservoirs all went dry and the fishing is poor. So that's something that you can't help.

Have you both traveled a lot while you lived here, to get away, to get to other parts of the country?

Yes, we have. Oh my God, I can't tell you all the places. We've been to Europe and we've been to South America and we've been to Mexico and we've been to Alaska. My wife could fill you in on that better than I. She has a very good history of our travels, but we have done a lot of traveling. Went to Tahiti, and we've taken a lot of trips, you know:

plane trips and boat trips. Never any long periods—maybe a couple of weeks at a time, or something like that.

Probably after your son was manager?

Uh-huh, where we could get away.

Now I want to talk about another topic that I ask everyone, because from the interviews I know it is a problem, and that is the health/doctor/hospital, the care here. And I want to find out from you how you feel.

Well, I also served on the Hospital Board. [laughs] Anyway, we've had an awful problem here with maintaining a hospital that has the facilities that everybody needs, you know. Somebody gets injured or becomes quite ill, they go over here, why, they take 'em to Elko or Winnemucca or someplace, you know, because we don't seem to be able to get a staff of doctors that want to stay here in a town this size. So it's been an expensive thing, the hospital. The taxpayers have been subsidizing it for years, you know. Maybe I'm a critic, but you go over there and you'll see fifteen or twenty people on the floor over there, working around, and three or four indigent people that are just living there, you know. There's been times when I guess it's saved lives. They *do* expedite people into Elko and stuff like this. But it seems like such an expense, I don't know.

I understand they don't do surgery or baby deliveries there.

No, no surgeries or babies.

Why?

I can't understand it, I don't know. The hospital looks to me like it has as good facilities as they do in Elko. Of course I'm just a layman.

Is it because they don't have the surgeons, the doctors?

I think they can't get doctors that want to live here and their wives don't want to live here or something. They don't stay. They'll come in for a while, and then they had them under contract from the Mormons and the Salt Lake Hospitals. You know, they have some kind of a program where they put their new doctors out on contracts.

Get their experience.

Yeah, get their experience. And I don't know why, but it's sure been a problem. But with all the mines and everything that's working in the area, you know, and you have so many injuries, you have to have someplace to get 'em in fast and get 'em out fast if they need to get out. So it has its advantages, but now they want to spend millions of dollars to enlarge it, and I can't see that, because as I say, I go over there once in a while for various things, and if you want to find out how many people are there, go over at dinnertime and see them all around the table there at mealtime. I mean [chuckles], that's when you find out how many people are working there. But there's a big staff there. Computers all over the place and people running around, and nobody in the beds.

Everything but doctors?

Well, they have one doctor there now. Sometimes they don't have any, but they do have one doctor there now.

Because most people, if they're in the hospital a long time, it's because of surgery.

Yeah, that's right.

And if they don't do surgery, they have to go somewhere else?

They have to go to Elko—most of them go to Elko.

Is that going to change? Or you don't know?

I don't see any prospect of it changing.

Would that be another reason people might want to come and stay, but then leave?

Could be, in some instances, I would assume. I don't know.

There's a lot of that in Austin, because there's no hospitals, and they have to leave and move to Fallon or go to Reno.

Yeah, they don't have anything there, they have to take the ambulance and go to Fallon or something.

And it's so expensive.

Oh yeah, very expensive.

Now seeing some of the ads, and hearing some of the things, did your Nevada Club have a big Thanksgiving dinner and celebration? I know the Owl Club did.

No, we closed down on Thanksgiving and Christmas and let our help off.

Let 'em all go to the Owl Club? [chuckles]

Let 'em all go where they wanna go. [chuckles] Have a day off.

I know you said the Lions Club met there. What are some of the other highlights in the years of the Nevada Club? Any special highlights to tell me about? Any special people or events?

Of course we run nightly entertainment, and we change the entertainment.

Where do they come from?

Well, I get 'em through agents, you know. I have to hire 'em through booking agents. Most of the agents that I deal with are in Idaho. Idaho Falls is one of the main agencies. I contract them for two weeks or three weeks or a month or whatever. Usually duos or trios, or something. Nothing big, but good entertainment. I put the entertainment in when I first took the place over—I mean, as soon as I got it remodeled to where I could, and have had it continually ever since.

And that, I'm sure, built up the business?

Oh, yes, definitely.

Do they come from surrounding areas on the weekends? the little towns?

Well, yes, they drift in from the ranches and the mines. And we get a certain amount from Winnemucca, or if there happens to be a group that somebody likes, they come in.

Do you advertise it around?

Yes.

How?

Papers.

Now, the Reveille closed here.

Yeah.

Is it the Bugle, the name it's being called now?

It is now, yes. The town isn't really big enough for two papers.

No, not for the advertising.

You know, you can't afford to advertise in every little old thing that comes along.

What do you see for the next decade, the future here in Battle Mountain, with the new increase in mining, with the gold prices up?

Well, of course you have to be practical about it, and say they're all a depletable resource: your gold, your barite, your copper—everything. Every shovelful you're taking out, you're depleting that much, and there has to be an end to it somewhere. Unless there's some new mineral...It's a highly-mineralized area, and a lot of the economy here depends on the minerals that's in the area. Ranching has been stable here over the years, but it isn't all that great, because, you know, there isn't that much forage here for ranching. So I say that it's going to reach a peak someday and maybe go down, unless they find a new mineral or something that is available here to them. As I said before, it's unlikely that we'll get very much industry in here, due to the transportation. Transportation is high and expensive if you have to haul your product somewhere to sell it. So if you're going to hunt ducks, you have to go where the ducks are, don't you? [laughs]

That's very smart. [chuckles] There's another area I want to cover. I know there's Indian colonies, and I've noticed some Mexican workers in the area. Are any of them utilized in your business?

I've used some of the Indian people around here. I haven't used too many Mexicans—not that I have anything against Mexicans, I worked and lived down there for several years in Mexico, mining and working. There's some fine people there. But the trouble is, I don't know, it seems like you get one and then you always got two or three of 'em around visiting, and they're kind of cliquey. [laughs] I haven't really hired too many of 'em, and my people don't speak any Spanish, and usually the people that are available for jobs don't speak much English. I speak some Spanish, and so they can't be hollering at me all the time to translate for 'em. [laughs] So consequently, I don't hire too many Mexicans, but I've hired some. One thing I will say for 'em, in the line of work that they are applying for, the menial labor, they're a lot better workers than most of the Americans. They're good workers, and that counts for a *lot*. Because you got so many people here now that all they want to do is sit around on unemployment, and I've had 'em for years. You offer 'em a job and they won't take it until their unemployment runs out, and then they'll work long enough to get it again and away they go.

Are there many of those in Battle Mountain?

There's enough of 'em here, yes, there are, quite a few.

Now I want to ask another question through the period here in Battle Mountain, about other kinds of entertainment. There is a movie theater here now, right?

No.

No movie theaters?

When I first came here, there was a movie theater. Shovelins had it—they're oldtimers here, the Shovelin family. They had a theater, but now there's no theater.

And I know there used to be dances. What other beside the two clubs, what other entertainment? or are you both it?

[chuckles] I guess we're it, unless you play slot machines [chuckles], if you call that entertainment.

Well, then your live entertainment that you have.

Yes. You know, different times, they have picnics and Fourth of July celebrations and this type of thing.

They just had bed races.

Yeah, they have this type of thing. I think this was the second year for the bed races.

Are there any problems in Battle Mountain with teenagers or with drinking or with drugs?

There's a little of all of that. Teenage drinking is quite a problem. If you look in the paper every week, you'll see a list of young people, teenagers...purchased liquor or drinking intoxicating beverages, and also in possession of controlled substances. So it's here—not to the extent that you see it in Reno or some of these other places, but it's here to a certain degree.

One other thing that I was going to ask you, which is legal here in all of Nevada, is the

prostitution. Bill Elquist took me to show me the one place here. Through your years at the Nevada Club was there any connection? Did the girls come to the Nevada Club? Do you have any personal information?

Very seldom. Most of the "madames" here, as they call them, the people that run it, restrict them from coming into the clubs while they're employed over there. That's been the rule since I've been here. Once in a while one will quit their job, and then come up and celebrate or something, but they're not connected with the place any more when they do this. So they control it pretty well, I would think. You don't hear of many disturbances over there.

There's nothing evident to an outsider at all.

No. No, there isn't. It's run quite efficiently, I would say.

In other words, they didn't connect with the clubs to send customers? Nothing like that?

No, not a bit.

Just wanted that on the record.

No, they don't. I see nothing wrong with their activity. It's an age-old business, and if it's run right...

Safer than going to the bar and picking up...

I think so.

Now, before we end the interview, is there anything that we haven't covered that you want to share? Your life or your business or anything else about Lander County?

I wouldn't know, in my particular activities. Of course I've engaged in turquoise mining to quite an extent since I've been here, you know.

Oh, no, I don't. Let's talk about that.

I've had two or three turquoise mines, and some fairly successful.

Can you tell me where they were?

Well, I had one over here in Indian Creek which is southeast about thirty miles out here. Then I had one down in the Winnemucca area. It was 10,000 feet elevation up there, about three-months-a-year job, due to the weather conditions. But I've mined considerable turquoise, and I still have a jewelry shop there in the hotel, if you've ever noticed.

I've noticed it, but now I appreciate it more.

And so we sold quite a bit of it there, and we've sold it to buyers all over the country.

I have a few questions: First, how did you come into these mines? Did you buy them from someone, or were you prospecting? And tell me a little more about the actual process.

Well, the first turquoise mine that I acquired, I had a girl dealing for me, dealing "21," and she was kind of a country girl, and she would go out prospecting and snooping around on her days off. She found a piece of turquoise out there on a hill somewhere and staked a claim on it. She came to me about it, and then wanted to know if I'd be interested in looking at it, and I said "sure." So I went out and looked at it. It impressed me a little bit, so I hired some heavy equipment and went in there and opened it up and it developed into a nice mine. And in the meantime, in my

contract, she was to be a partner, 25 percent partner on the first thirty days or something, and then at that time if I wanted to buy her out, I could. And I did buy her out, so I owned it.

Can you tell me the process of mining, and did you do it alone?

No, no, I had took in two partners: one happened to have a Cat[erpillar] and the other one was a pretty good worker [chuckles], so the three of us had this Lander Blue Mine, and it was very good grade. See the ring here, that's Lander Blue. It was beautiful turquoise. We mined that for a couple of years. Then it depleted, it ran out. So then I acquired one over in Winnemucca from a fellow that had a claim up on Sonoma Peak up there by Winnemucca. And I mined that for a couple of years in the summertime when I could. It was at a higher elevation than the first mine I had—10,000 feet, to be exact—it was snowed-in a good part of the year, but it did have two or three months we could work up there. We worked it for a couple of years, but it wasn't too profitable, and so I just gave it up.

Now, I have a couple of questions, because you have that lovely turquoise jewelry in your Nevada Club. Who do you have make the jewelry, and who did you sell the turquoise to?

I sold most of the turquoise to people in Arizona.

When you say "people," tell me...

Dealers, you know, that buy rough turquoise and polish it and put it into jewelry and sell it—Albuquerque and that country.

Do they hire the Indians to make the jewelry?

Mostly all Indian-made. Then I buy it back from them after it's processed and put into jewelry. We cut a lot of our own stones too. We had some stonecutters and I would take the stones, say, well, I want a certain type of bracelet made, and give it to 'em, and then the Indians would actually do the work. It was very interesting. Turquoise mining is something like gold mining. When you get a piece of gold, you can see it and you know you've got something. You get a piece of turquoise, same way] you know it's valuable. Very interesting, and I enjoyed it very much.

Is that over now?

Yes, I've given it all up. The problem with the turquoise industry now is that like a lot of other things, they've come in and plasticized it and dyed it and made all kinds of... They still call it turquoise, but it's manmade turquoise. They put it on the market by the bucketfuls, and it's ruined the price of the real turquoise. And most people can't tell the difference, just by looking at it.

And some don't care. [chuckles]

Some don't give a darn! [chuckles] So that really ruined our market, unless we wanted to go into the plasticizing business, which I didn't, anyway.

So you've certainly been into a lot of activities. Anything else that we haven't covered?

Oh, gosh no, I've taken a fling at a few things. I went into Mexico, mining. If you want to go back into the Mexican part of it, I was down there mining, and I branched off into the charcoal business, making charcoal. This was down...I don't know if you're

familiar with the country—it's on the west coast of Mexico down in Sonora.

Yes.

So I was in the charcoal business there for three or four years. We had the Indians make it down near Guaymas, delta of the Yaqui River. Made it out of mesquite. And the mesquite trees are rather rank and large there, and the Mexicans would cut the mesquite down and burn it in these kilns. Then we would load it in the cars and ship it up to the United States and sell it. Then we branched off from that and put in our own briquetting plant. We put that in at Nogales. And we would make this charcoal, we'd grind it up and put it into briquettes. We made it for everybody: Sears and Roebuck and all the different stores. They'd just furnish the bags, and we'd bag it up and sell it.

You've done many things!

We did that for two or three years, and then we [chuckles] leased a thousand acres over on the Gulf of Lower California—planted wheat and cotton.

Oh, my goodness! [laughs] Did you do any ranching here in Lander County?

No, I haven't done any ranching here at all.

What are your life activities, or non-activities, like now at this stage?

At this stage of the game?

What do you do? What are your days like?

Well, I get up in the morning about eight o'clock and I go over to the hotel for a couple

of hours, hour-and-a-half, read the newspaper and come back and have breakfast and work in the yard around here or go fishing or hunting or something. I go back over at one o'clock every morning and close the games down.

You do?! You go over at one in the morning?

Yes ma'am.

No wonder you sleep a little bit...Every night!

[chuckles] Every morning I go in and close the "21" games down and get the banks up for the slot machine people, and come home about two o'clock.

My gosh! No wonder you have a sign there, "Day Sleeper." [chuckles]

[laughs] But I don't sleep...I sleep for about four hours at a time.

Oh my gosh! I want to go back. You said in your early period when you first leased the Nevada Club that you struggled to take care of the gambling yourself, as a dealer. How did you know what to do?

Well, I didn't when I first took the place over. I leased the games for the first two years, see, to a fellow. I'd go there and work with him a little, and got my hand in. When I figured I could do it, I run him off and did it myself! [laughter]

Was that fun? Did you like that?

I enjoyed it. You know, you're working with the public, and you have a lot of good days, and once in a while you have a bad one.

How long did you do that yourself, as a dealer?

Oh, probably twenty years.

Oh you did?! Long time.

Yeah, off and on. But I've been in it for a good many years.

Who does that now?

I hire the help now. I go down once in a while. Things get going bad, I go in and deal myself, right now.

Now when you hire people, where do they learn? Do you teach them, or have they started at other gambling places?

Most of them have been other places, but sometimes we break in and get a little girl that wants to learn to deal and put 'em in and watch 'em and teach 'em and bring 'em along that way. It's simpler now, we only have one "21" game, where I had craps and roulette and all that stuff. Being in a small place like this, they had to know a little about *all* of it—not just be a specialized person, see.

Now again, before we close, anything else in Lander County, or any other changes that you want to share before we end the interview?

I don't think so. I guess maybe Connie and I have both had visions of going back to California some day, but we've outlived all our relatives and friends, and if we went back now, we wouldn't know anybody!

And not only that, but you'd find with the high cost of housing and taxes, you couldn't live as well.

And traffic. I can't drive over there any more. I can drive out here in the country, but if I get down there with the freeways and the people and...My God! I can't hack it. [laughs]

Well, it's been a very interesting, fascinating interview. You've had a fascinating life, and we thank you for sharing it with the Lander County Oral History Project. I especially enjoyed it, because from the first time I came to Battle Mountain in February, Nevada Club is where I always go! [laughs]

Keep up the good work! [laughs]

This is the end of the interview.

HENRY DORIAN PHOTOGRAPHS



HENRY DORIAN
AUGUST 2, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

HENRY DORIAN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Henry Dorian Interview

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PREFACE

Bill Elquist's father, John Kimball Elquist, born in Utah in 1904, went to mine gold on some claims in Mill Canyon, Eureka County, Nevada. When the gold market declined during World War II, Mr. Elquist, his wife and children went to Copper Canyon. He also leased a mine in Copper Basin and found so much blue gem turquoise, he started a turquoise business. They moved into Battle Mountain where Mr. Elquist opened the Blue Chip Turquoise Store. He went on selling trips and most of the turquoise went to New Mexico to the Zuni Indians, and some went into jewelry to sell in the store.

Bill's mother was a waitress for twenty-two years at the Owl Club. When Bill was in his senior year, he worked as a desk clerk at the Nevada Hotel. When he finished high school, he joined the U. S. Marine Corps and went overseas in the occupation of Japan for two years, then in 1950 got called back in the Korean conflict.

When Bill returned to Battle Mountain, he worked as a shovel operator for Wells Cargo at Getchell mine, met and married the daughter of an electrician working at the mine. He was transferred to Reno by Wells Cargo as a heavy transport truck driver. In 1972 he returned to Battle Mountain, and describes the changes he observed. He went in the barite mining business with his father and brothers. When he was appointed county commissioner in 1985, Bill left the Elquist Mining Company, and bought heavy equipment to go into his own business.

Bill is Commander of the American Legion and Past Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He has a collection of over a thousand music records. He also collects hats, especially those with funny sayings, and some of his five hundred hats are hanging on the walls of his house. He's especially interested in kids, and added a large room to his house for anybody who wants to use it for a good cause, especially for kids. There are karate classes, belly dancing, clogging, VFW meetings and

American Legion meetings and parties. There is never a charge!

After the interview Bill took me on a little tour, showing me Broyles Ranch Subdivision property purchased by the Elquists in 1980. It was suburbs then. They subdivided and sold the land off in lots which sold quickly, some to the mining companies for housing for their employees.

Bill, now on his second four-year term as commissioner, said his main concern is to make Battle Mountain a nicer place to live. An outgoing, happy, unselfish man, Bill radiates joy in all of his activities and the people around him. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Lander County Oral History Project.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Bill Elquist at his home at 745 West Humboldt, Battle Mountain, Nevada. The date is August 20, 1993.

Good afternoon, Bill. It's a pleasure to be here interviewing you for the Lander County Oral History Project, one that you've been sponsoring with such support and enthusiasm. First, would you give me your full name?

Bill Elquist: William Kimball Elquist.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, January 23, 1927.

Now I want to know just a little bit about your grandparents. Tell me your father's father—your grandfather on your father's side—his name, where he was born, and when.

His name was Alexander Sander Elquist. He was born December 12, 1865, in Sweden.

And what about your grandmother on your father's side?

Her name was Alpha Judd. She was born in Grantsville, Utah, in 1876.

Now tell us your mother's father, your grandfather on your mother's side. What was his name, and where and when was he born?

William H. Martin. He was born in Lakeview, Utah, Toole County.

So now let's get to your parents. Tell me your father's name, and where your father was born.

John Kimball Elquist. He was born in Grantsville, Utah, June 12, 1904.

And your mother's name, her maiden name.

Marva Jane Martin, born July 15, 1908 in Oakley, Idaho.

Now did they ever tell you how they met and where they met?

They met at a dance in Marion, Idaho, in a dance hall.

Did they start to go together then?

Yes.

Where were they married?

In Oakley, Idaho.

When did your family come to Lander County, Nevada?

They came to Lander County in 1942.

So then you lived quite a while in Idaho?

We lived in Idaho, then we came to Mill Canyon, Nevada, which is over in Crescent Valley in Eureka County. From Eureka County, we came to Lander County.

I'm going to go back to when you were born, which was in 1927 in Twin Falls, Idaho. Tell me your recollection when your family first moved to Nevada. How old were you when you first moved to Nevada? not Lander County, but to this state.

I was in the sixth grade. I was about eleven or twelve years old, and then I went to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade in Mill Canyon in Eureka County and I graduated in 1941 I believe.

Now, what brought your family to Nevada? Was your father a miner?

Yes, he was a miner. He had bought some mining claims in Mill Canyon and we lived there for several years. He mined gold there, and when the market went off a' gold during the war, he came to Battle Mountain and worked at Copper Canyon in the copper mine then. He was underground superintendent in Copper Canyon for several years.

Do you know what year you came to Battle Mountain?

1943.

I know you had a big family with a lot of brothers and sisters. Was that hard for your family to move about like that and for your mother?

No, they didn't seem to bother.

So when you came to Battle Mountain in the forties, you were pretty grown by then, right?

When I graduated from the eighth grade, there was no high school in Mill Canyon where my folks were, so I went back with my grandfolks to Oakley, Idaho and I went two years in high school in Oakley, Idaho, then I spent my last two years at Battle Mountain High School.

So did the rest of your brothers and sisters also go to Oakley to go to high school?

No, they went to high school here in Battle Mountain.

When you came back for the two years in Battle Mountain, was that when you really came to live here?

My folks lived here before that, but I was with my grandparents in Idaho.

Right, so I want to know when you came.

Yes, that's when I came to live here.

Ok, so when you came, you were what, probably seventeen or eighteen?

Yes.

Tell us what Battle Mountain looked like to you then. Tell us a little bit about it then—this was in the forties? Was this during the war?

Yes, it was. During the war, Battle Mountain was quite a bit smaller than it is now. There weren't too many service stations, the high school was where the hospital is now

and Battle Mountain was a lot smaller—there was very few people here. Mostly people were ranchers and miners and railroaders.

Where did your family live when they moved here to Battle Mountain and when you came home?

What street? It was on Third Street—West Third. I don't know what number it was but I could go up there.

Was it a house?

Oh, yes.

Did they rent it or buy it?

They rented first, and later on, they bought a house on Toole Street over by Sierra Power [Company], and we still own that. It's in the family as yet.

Is family living it?

No, it's rented.

When your father came to Battle Mountain, that's when he was working for the copper mine?

Yes. He went to work for the copper mine, but he was also—he leased and did mining himself.

And where did he do that?

In Copper Basin. He ended up being a turquoise miner in blue gem turquoises.

Did you go to the mines with him?

When I was younger, yes, but not in later years because I was on my own, so to speak.

I want to go back to those years when he was with the turquoise mine. Did you visit the mine? Can you describe and tell us what your father's mine was like?

Oh yes, I remember it very well. When I'd come up on weekends and stuff, I'd go help him. Blue gem turquoise was a very popular turquoise in those days and we had a pretty good supply of it. My brother, Jim, is still in the turquoise business, so to speak.

Now, in relationship to Battle Mountain, what direction and how far was that mine?

It was south about four miles and then turn west about a mile. It's in Copper Basin.

Very close. So describe what you did when you and your dad worked in the mine. Describe what it looked like and what you did.

When I first worked in the mines in Mill Canyon, it was underground and we had little ore cars and we drilled, and shot, and blasted and mucked the ore out by hand, and I used to get a whole bunch of that. That was my main thing on the weekends out of schools. Up runnin' and drillin' and shootin' and muckin' the ore out of the waste and ore both.

Do you have any photographs of any of that mining?

Oh, I'm sure I do somewhere.

You've got to find it for us.

Okay.

Did he get much turquoise from it?

He got quite a bit of turquoise. We still have a pretty good pile of it. My brother has a lot of turquoise in his basement.

Who did he sell the turquoise to?

It went all over. It went to New Mexico mostly. The market was mostly down there for turquoise.

Was that to the Indians who made the jewelry?

Yes, the Zunis, I think, bought a lot for jewelry from him.

How did he do this marketing and selling?

He would go on selling trips. That's the way my one brother, Allen, was killed in an airplane crash.

Where was that?

I had one brother, he had his own airplane. He was flying to New Mexico to sell turquoise and they crashed at Cedar City, Utah.

How long did your dad work in the turquoise mine?

Probably ten years or more.

Was it lucrative?

Oh yes, he made a good living at it.

What did he do with the mine? Did it run out of turquoise, or what happened?

At the present time, Duval bought the property and he retained the turquoise rights on it and as far as I know, he's still got 'em, but at the present time, Battle Mountain Gold has obtained the property. So sometime, if they ever mine turquoise again, I'm sure that my brother Jim and the family will have the rights. We're not pushin' because turquoise isn't doin' much right now.

Now beside the turquoise mining, what other way did your dad make a living for this big family?

He was a mine superintendent for Copper Canyon, and in later years, he was the underground mine superintendent at Copper Canyon. He also had the Blue Chip Turquoise Store right here in town. He sold it in his later years.

Oh, where was that store?

Presently where the Lemaire Store is.

Oh, the Lemaire Store! Is that right?

Yeah, he had a place in it.

In other words, he had a little place within that complex?

Yes.

And did he have people make jewelry from the turquoise, or just sell the turquoise itself?

He had jewelry made up and sold turquoise also.

How interesting. Did you help in the store?

No. [chuckles] I wasn't much of a store person.

Tell me a little bit about your mom who must have been real busy raising this big family. Can you tell me a little bit about her?

Well she liked to be busy, so she was a waitress for twenty-two years at the Owl Club. Butch Hinman was her boss.

Now how old were you kids when she did this?

Oh, I was gone.

Oh, so the kids were bigger?

Kids were grown pretty well, yes.

Do you have a picture of your mom and dad?

Oh sure—many, many.

I'd like to look at pictures later and copy some. Now I want to go back to you. You did two years of high school in Battle Mountain. Let's talk about those two years in high school. First, I want to know a little bit about what school was like and what teenage kids did in Battle Mountain—your friends, what you did for recreation?

In my senior class, there were three boys and four girls. There were seven of us. Two of the boys are dead now, and I think there's two of the girls still alive. So there's three of us or possibly four that remain out of seven.

Such a small class, that's so surprising.

There weren't very many people in Battle Mountain in those days.

What do you think the population was?

The whole county was probably under three thousand.

Now what year did you graduate?

In 1945.

In 1945, okay, that was during the war. How did the war affect Battle Mountain?

The gold mining was no gold mining. Mostly copper and ranching. There was no gold mining whatsoever 'cause gold wasn't figured a necessity, so anything pertaining to gold was just forgotten and there is a lot of gold mines here at the present. Gold is our main economy right here now. In those days, there was no use for it.

In other words, they had to mine to help the war effort?

Yes, copper and lead was the main objective.

Was that sold to the government?

Oh yes.

Was there a lot of that? Did new people come in to help with that. mining?

There were several. Not a whole lot, but copper mining was Copper Basin and Copper Canyon. Now presently, the copper's forgotten and they're all in gold.

So that was the period your dad was very busy with the copper mines?

Yes.

And what was it like for the high school kids with the war going on? Did a lot of friends go into the service?

A lot of friends went in the service and we couldn't get any gas to run up and down the streets. Gas was rationed. You have to have stamps. You just couldn't go anywhere. You either walked or if you were lucky enough to have a bicycle, you might ride your bicycle a little bit.

So what did you kids do, or did you work a lot beside going to school?

In my senior year, I was a desk clerk at the Nevada Hotel, and I drove the school bus for the high school kids—well the school kids from Copper Canyon in to school every morning and took 'em home every night, and I played football and basketball and was a desk clerk. I was real busy in my younger days.

Doesn't sound like you had any time for fun. Did you get into fishing and hunting?

Little bit, but not too much. I didn't have too much time for that.

Sounds like you didn't. When you finished high school, did you go into any kind of work full-time, or did you work at just a lot of different things?

When I finished high school, I went in the United States Marine Corps immediately out of graduation. I was probably home ten days after graduation, and I was gone.

Did you enlist?

Yes.

Did you go overseas?

Yes, I went overseas a couple times. I went overseas in 1945. I went into Okinawa, China and Japan. I was in the occupation of Japan for two years. I came back, and in 1950 I got called back in the Korean conflict, and I put fourteen months in Korea in the First Marine Division. I was in the Chosen Frozen, the Chosen Reservoir and I got out of the service and I came home.

What was it like for someone who grew up in small towns to get into the strangeness of these new countries and a new life in the military?

I enjoyed Japan very much. I enjoyed China I didn't enjoy Korea too much because it was real cold and miserable and there was a big war goin' on. You didn't have time for too much pleasure.

Were you hurt or did you have any physical ailments from the war?

No, no, I came out alright.

One of the lucky ones. And so how long were you in the military altogether?

A total of six years. I was two years in Korea and about four years—approximately six years.

Now, during that six years, did you get back to Battle Mountain at all?

On furlough a few times, not too much. I got boot leave and I didn't get home again 'til after I got back from Japan which was several years. When I got called back in the Marine Corps in the Korean conflict, I was

gone immediately and I didn't get home 'til I was out, it was over.

When you were gone those few years and then you came back, what changes did you see here in Battle Mountain?

Really not too much. It grew just a little bit. The old high school was tore down and the hospital was there and they built a new high school. Other than that, pretty well the same. The freeway was bypassin' the town and the traffic wasn't through town like it used to be, which makes it a lot nicer I think. Keeps the traffic out of town.

What year did they build the freeway to bypass town?

That's a good question. I would say it was in 1953, 1954—right along there. I'm not sure of exact time.

So quite a while ago.

Yes.

Was there a controversy in town when they built the highway to bypass the town? Because I can imagine that it might have affected, or businesses would have thought it would have affected their businesses with cars circling away and not necessarily coming in.

I'm sure there was a real conflict because the middle overpass that some of the people wanted, which is the middle of town, some of the business people didn't want it because they wanted to divert the traffic right straight through town rather than staying on the freeway. Yes, there was some controversy.

But I imagine others were glad that they didn't have all that traffic coming through. Is that right?

Yes. Except the business people, they wanted the people coming through there.

Did it affect their business?

Oh, I'm certain it did, yeah.

Who made the final decision that it should bypass town?

BE. Well that came out of the state.

Oh, okay.

Yeah it wasn't local.

So now you came back from the military. Did you go back into your family's home?

No. When I got out of the service I was married and I moved my wife to Luning, Nevada and I worked for Wells Cargo driving truck down there for couple years. Then I was transferred to Reno and I was in Reno for twenty years.

Alright, let's back up a little bit. You said you were married. Where and when did you marry?

May 3, 1950, in Winnemucca, Nevada.

And who did you marry?

Patricia Ann Tracy.

And where did you both meet?

At Getchell Mine.

Where's that?

It's about fifty miles northeast of Battle Mountain.

And were you working there?

Yeah, I worked for Wells Cargo as a shovel operator.

Did you say Wells?

Cargo, "C."

Wells Cargo. Sounds like Wells Fargo. And what was she doing there?

Her father was an electrician for Getchell Mine and she was with her folks.

So you married and were you in the military when you married?

I was out of the military for a short time. I married her, and then I got called back in the Korean War.

So then you came back and you were still married to her and so then where did you pick up your lives?

We moved to Luning, Nevada. I worked down there for approximately a year, then I was transferred for the same outfit into Reno, Nevada, and I worked in Reno for probably ten or twelve years.

Were you still with Wells Cargo?

Yes.

Okay, and tell me what you did for them.

I was a heavy transport driver—regular truck driver, but I did a lot of transportin' of heavy equipment.

When did you come back to Battle Mountain?

In 1972.

So you were away quite a while from Battle Mountain.

Yes.

Although, were you coming back to visit your family?

Oh, certainly yeah.

Between that period in the seventies, what kind of changes were there here in Battle Mountain?

Quite a few. The freeway bypassed the town and the high school, as I said a while ago, where the hospital is now, they have a new high school. The roads are updated through town quite a bit.

Now I want to learn a little about the fluctuation of population due to the ups and downs of mining. Because your father was a miner and you were up and back—you weren't here the whole time—did you observe new people coming in when there was a spurt of mining, and then a drop in the economy when it slowed?

The reason I came back to Battle Mountain, I went in the barite mining business with my brothers and my father. We mined for Dresser Industries for approximately three years and then barite went to pot, so to speak, and we didn't mine barite anymore.

Now, what was the name of that company?

Elquist Mining.

Oh, it was your family's company, Elquist Mining?

No, we were working for Dresser Industries.

Dresser Industries?

Mining barite, yes. In Slavin Canyon.

And where was that?

It's east of Battle Mountain, probably ten miles.

And I had read the reason for the barite dropping here was because China started to ship it over real cheap? Was that true?

The Chinese were shippin' it into the Gulf Coast cheaper than we could put it on the railroad and ship it there. So yeah, they cut our prices way down. There's still a lot of barite around here but it don't pay to mine it.

Okay, so you were doing that. Now that's when you left Reno? Were you still married and you came back to mine with your brother? Was it after you worked in Reno for Wells Cargo?

Yes. I was married for a short time and my wife in Reno died. Pat died. So then, after that...

Then you came here?

I was here when she died. Yes she was living in our place down there and she died while I was here. I was still married to her, yes.

So the barite mining ended. What did you do next?

After barite mining?

Uh-huh.

Well I got a little excavation company. I got a blade, new backhoe, and a cat. I did a lot of exploration work.

Now you had your own company doing it or what?

I dissolved with my brothers when I become county commissioner because a county commissioner, I couldn't go out and spend weeks out on a job so I went and got my own equipment and I kind of went by myself.

Let's back up. You said about going onto the county commission. When and how did that first happen and what year?

I was appointed county commissioner in 1985; I think it was October.

That was the first time. Outlet's go back before 1985. I mean what did you do—barite mining ended and your wife had died, and before you became county commissioner, there must have been a span of years there.

I was working with Elquist Mining, mining barite and stuff. When the barite dropped, then it was right around that period of time that I become a commissioner.

In other words, it was in the eighties when the barite dropped?

Right. Yeah.

And so when you went on the board of commissioners then you bought your equipment to do your own?

I had it already, so to speak. I just went on my own instead of. To work with Elquist Mining, you gotta be there eight hours a day and I had to have a job where I'm kinda my own boss.

First let's go to where you were your own boss. Tell me the kinds of things that you did in your Elquist Mining Company, or still do.

I still do it, yeah. I was catskinner and blade operator and a backhoe operator and whatever it takes. If you want a catskinner, I'm a catskinner. I've got one of every piece of equipment made, almost.

So in other words, they all know that if they need some of that work done, they get you and the equipment?

No, I got my own equipment.

I know. They get you and your equipment.

If people in town want it done, yes.

And do they all know you? You get calls a lot?

Yes, I do.

Do you also get calls from the bigger mining companies?

I've done a lot of work for everybody. I've done work for Coastal Chem, Share Chemical and FMC—all the companies here in town. And I did a lot of mining exploration roads in the mountains. I probably got lots of miles of road in the mountains pushin' with a cat.

So that's been going on and pretty productive for you?

Yes, I get more than I want.

More than you want. Do you hire anyone?

Not no more. I'm on Social Security and commissioner's pay.

Oh, you don't want to make too much.

I can't make very much. No, I just tinker along.

So now let's go to the board of commissioners which is, as I have observed myself, a time-consuming responsibility, but you seem to take to it and shine. Tell me a little about your years on the board of commissioners—some of the highlights and some of the things that you can tell that are some of the downsides.

Well, when I first was a commissioner, the money was on a shortfall and we had to freeze everything. We couldn't hire anybody and wages were frozen. We couldn't buy anything and it was just almost nothin'. Then when the gold mines came back up, so to speak, we started gettin' a little money in our pocket, then we started buyin' a little new equipment for the county and puttin' a few people on and buildin' the roads back up and so forth. But we did have some real dry years when I was a commissioner.

Is it an elective process?

I was appointed for two years. I served a four-year term, I'm on my second four-year term. I have a year and three or four months left on it.

So you've been a commissioner quite a long time. When the county seat moved from Austin to Battle Mountain, I know from interviews in both towns the controversy. What can you tell me, during that period, what it was like?

When it was good ya' mean?

No, what it was like—the controversy when the vote was coming up to move the county seat to Battle Mountain?

That was before my time. My father was a commissioner at that time. There was a lot of dissention over it. And there's still some of the old people that didn't care for it but it happened and that's the way it is.

But wasn't it just in 1980 when all that happened?

Yeah, I think so.

The county seat was moved?

Yeah, I think it was, yeah.

So, you were here?

No, I was in Reno.

Oh, you were still in Reno in 1980, I see. And when did you start as Commissioner?

In 1985.

In 1985. Had it quieted down by 1985, this contention between Austin and Battle Mountain? Is there still some discord in Austin itself, because they lost their bank?

Yeah, they don't say much to me when I'm down there, but there is some little hassling

goin' on there, that's for sure. And I don't get involved in that part of it.

Of course the county seat was moved and you weren't here yet, but has it brought a lot more activity to Battle Mountain and as I observed, just in the few months I've been coming and going, more people being hired, more jobs opening in Battle Mountain, county jobs here?

We have a lot more deputies. Yes, I'd say that we have hired quite a few people.

In the time since 1985, have you seen a growth in the general population here 'cause of the additional gold mining that started up?

Yes, but I've also seen Elko Bay came to town, they brought four or five hundred people in, and Battle Mountain Gold hired a few more, and barite went down but it's coming back a little bit now. So it's not too bad right at the present.

And when the miners come in, do some of them settle here and buy homes?

Oh yes. Elko Bay built a lot of homes here and they built a lot of lots. They bought some ground off me to build.

In other words, they buy land and build places so they'll have a place for the workers they want to come?

Yes.

Where do the workers come from?

All over. There's a lot of 'em here from Wyoming and that section of the country. From all over, but mostly in the western states.

You said something about money started to come in when the miners were here. Is there a tax base so that when mining starts, more money comes in, or do they donate, or how does that income come?

We got a tax base, we got a bullion tax which on their profit, we get certain percent of the profit. I'm not sure what it is right now, but it brings our bank account up quite a bit.

Good, good. And what happens with the schools? Doesn't it crowd the schools?

They get their share. They get their share of the taxes.

Okay, in other words, the schools get additional so they can add teachers or classrooms?

Sure, yeah.

Now one of the things I've heard in all the interviews is the problem with the health conditions here as far as doctors and hospitals. Tell me what you see as the future, because it seems without doctors and a good hospital, it makes it hard for people to get proper care, or maybe keeps them from staying.

Right now, we do have a hospital problem. We don't have the money to build a new, fancy hospital and I don't think we have the population to sustain a good hospital. I think that we're gonna have to have a good emergency first aid station, then if it's real bad, we gotta care flight 'em out. And that's about all we can afford because there's not enough taxpayers here to afford it. And that's the same with our jail and all the other things we need.

Are they thinking of maybe a clinic?

We have a clinic.

You do?

Yeah. I think I'd like to see our hospital updated to a good first-class emergency [facility], then if they're bad, transfer 'em out to a big one. It's about all we can do. I would like to see a good, big hospital here and everything, but it takes money to do that and we don't have it.

But what about—are there doctors?

We'd have a hard time holdin' doctors here.

Is that 'cause of the hospital conditions?

Yes. We do have a couple good ones at present, but they rotate pretty often.

Do the people reject more taxation?

They certainly do.

In other words, they want services, but don't want to have raised taxes?

That's just about it. They want the services but they don't want to pay the taxes. But we're right against our tax cap right now in the state, so we can't come up with much more.

Oh, so there's a cap?

There's a cap, yes, uh-huh. We have to live within the cap.

I know the roads in the state are some of the best anywhere. Where does that come from where they can keep up the roads so good? It's unusual.

That's out of our property tax and our taxes comin' in—the road and bridge gets their percent and the hospitals get their percent and the schools get their percent. It's all divvied out according to the schedule.

What do you foresee in the next decade with the mining really increasing 'cause of the gold? Do you see this continuing? Do you see mining still flourishing?

Mining will flourish as long as gold prices stay up. We have a lot of mineralization in this county and in this area and we're gonna certainly get our percent. We have a big mine at Mule Canyon which is close, it's in Lander County. From an airplane in the sky at ten thousand feet, you can count a lot of big—you can count Elko Bay, Cortez, the Mule Canyon, Rabbit Creek, and Getchell, Marigold and Lonetree. You can see all those mines from the ten thousand foot. You can count 'em all, and we are right in the hub of the mining industry.

That sounds good. Well it looks to outsiders like a good economy here because so many parts of the country are hurting where people aren't working. It looks here like if you want to work, there's a lot of kinds of work; construction, mining, ranching. Is that so?

There's a lot of mining and the construction, and right now we have FMC, Coastal Chem, and Sierra Chemical that supply the mining industry. So they have quite a few people and that's in support—mining support. They have to have their acids and their cyanides and all the things it takes to get that gold.

Because you know what some of the key things in Battle Mountain are, what are some of the things that you see happening here in the

next few years? I know that you said you can't support a hospital, but what do you foresee in the next few years here?

I can see a little bit of growth, maybe not a whole lot, it all depends on how gold goes. A mine opens up in Mule Canyon which is about fifteen miles east, we'll have to build a road over the mountain to pull them into town here. If not, they'll go to Carlin and Elko—get out on the freeway. So that should employ up to five hundred people. So if we could pull a hundred and fifty families over here, it'd help, but we won't get 'em all but we might get a good percent. Then we got the Pipeline job which is also another big mine out of Cortez. There's a lot of big mines possible for development if the price of gold stays up.

Now when you say pipeline, what is that?

Pipeline's another big mining discovery in Gold Acres country in Crescent Valley, and they call it the Pipeline. Pipeline don't mean pipeline, it's the mine or ore body.

It seems like a lot of tourists come through too, because staying at Holiday Inn Express, they're packed.

Yeah, there are. And we got some good facilities now to handle em. I think we'll always get our share.

I know there's the Nevada Club and the Owl Club and I go over there and eat and they're bustling. Were you here when they were both starting?

They were started when I was here. The Owl Club, when I was a kid in high school, it was just a little teeny restaurant and bar

right next to it, and *that* was nothin'. There was a store there and a hardware and a whole buncha things right in the vicinity of the Owl Club, now it's all the Owl Club. And Nevada Hotel was the same way. There was a barber shop in there and another little store, and just expanded. There used to be a soda fountain in the Nevada when I was in high school. Yeah, it's changed. Downtown has changed. Now it's all casinos and drug store. That's all there is on the main block.

And I know in Nevada, of course, that the gambling is legitimate except for Austin, because there I know, I read and observe when I'm there, that they passed laws, only minor gambling and no prostitution, and I know prostitution is legal and what's the prostitution picture here in Battle Mountain? 'cause there's certainly nothing in evidence.

[chuckles] When I was a kid, I lived right across the street from it. I don't see a whole lot of business down there—mostly truck drivers off the freeway.

Is there one place or what?

There's only one now. There used to be two.

And where are they?

They're on up First Street, North First.

Is it obvious, or does it have pictures, or how do you know? How would someone know?

They get a lot of calls on the freeway. The truckers are always talkin' to 'em on. They got a CB (Citizens' Band radio) and they call the truckers. They talk to 'em. No, it's obvious, everybody knows about it.

But it's not obvious?

Well, it says it right on it.

Oh, it does? I'll have to go by and see that.

You haven't seen it?

I haven't looked.

No, it's pretty obvious.

I also wanted to ask about the Indian colony. Can you tell me anything about that?

The old colony? It's been there for quite a few years. Now they have one they call the new colony which is the other side of the freeway and it's a nice addition. They keep it nice and clean down there.

Now is that under federal or is that under your commissioners?

No, that's federal. Nothin' to do with us.

You have nothing to do about that?

No, uh-uh.

Also I noticed, I come from the border of Mexico and of course we have many coming from Mexico, but I saw quite a few Spanish-speaking people here. Have they come up here to work? Were they here a long time, or can you tell me anything about that population?

Most of the Spanish people came up from the railroad, I believe. Most of the ones I know are associated with the railroad, and there's very few other than that. I haven't seen too many. Some way or another, came in on the railroad.

And tell me a little, when you were here, was the railroad from here to Austin active?

No.

It was gone by then?

It was all gone by then.

And what about the regular trains that were coming through and there were passenger stops. Was that gone?

There were passenger stops when I was in high school, but they don't stop here anymore, they go to Winnemucca or Elko.

What else that I haven't covered can you tell us that would shed more light on Lander County from your life here—I know you weren't here the whole time—but from your life and your role on the commission?

I think that in my years of service, we've seen a lot. We were trying to build a Rock Creek Dam out there, which would be a recreational dam.

Where's that?

That's thirty-eight miles north.

And what did you call it?

The Rock Creek Dam. We're tryin' to get that in. We're gettin' a lot of problem from bureaucratic BLM (Bureau of Land Management)—bureaucratic static so to speak. The Indians say they have a burial ground out there but we're still tryin'. We're gonna do our best to get it in. It would be a good asset to this area because it'd give us some recreational area—fishin', boatin', so to speak.

Oh, that would be nice. Now I know that you showed me a lot of trophies, so I want to cover some of your activities, and also you're very active in the veterans' organizations locally. Tell me a little bit about that organization, how many are in it, what you do in it, and something about its role here in Battle Mountain.

I'm Past Commander of the VFW, (Veterans of Foreign Wars), and we got twenty-nine life paid members and we probably got pretty close to fifty members, but it's hard to get much activity out of 'em. At present, I'm a Commander of the American Legion and we have twenty-eight members, and we like to help the kids out, that's our main object.

In what way? What are your projects? How do you help the kids?

We have a rifle team we supported and just little things for the school. A lot of kid activities and we had a meeting last night with the VFW. We had state commanders here and all of 'em. We had a pretty good turnout. We're really gonna get real active and the ladies' auxiliaries are takin' hold and they're doin' pretty good. We did fall by the wayside for a while, everybody got too busy. We'll hopefully come back and get things goin' again.

When you help the kids, how do you raise money?

We have a Fourth of July, and we have booths down there and we sell poppies and anything we can do to raise funds. We help the kids. We'll present 'em with some plaques over at the high school.

With what kind of plaques?

Just plaques, ya' know, on the history of the United States and all that stuff, that we've presented 'em through the years.

Now also you showed me some of your awards for the bed race. Now for those away from this area, it's a first I learned of it here, tell us what is a bed race, and when it occurs, and how you win awards.

[laughs] I didn't know anything about it 'til last year. I'd never heard of a bed race. I watched 'em last year and Ruby, which is our welfare director, she got on my case, so I made a bed this year, and I come in fourth in the main event and the second day in the "scramble" they call it, I took first place.

Now let's back up. When you said you made a bed, what do they do with the beds to put it in the race?

It has to be a bed.

A real bed?

A real bed, and it has to have wheels on it, and they can't be over six inches.

Now do you decorate the bed?

You do anything you want with it.

What did you do?

I just hung two flags on it and put my name on the front of it. I've got it, if you want a picture of it, I'll take you over...

Oh good. I want to get a picture of you—not on it, but next to it.

I've got it hangin' in the top of my shop.

Now, what do you do in a bed race? Do you race?

Ya' have four guys pushin' it, then you find the lightest person you can possibly find and stick on it to ride it.

In other words, somebody is on the bed?

Yes.

Lying down?

Had a little gal by the name of Carrie was on our bed and she weighed eighty pounds. She's a cute little blonde. She got a pretty fast ride.

[laughs] Tell me where you start and where you end.

It's over by the high school. We had it marked out, it's in the parkin' lot over to the high school, so it was about probably a block long race. There were fifteen beds this year that took place. I took fourth the first day and then I took first the second day.

In other words, they had two races?

Yeah, first and second day. Second day was a "scramble" they called it.

A scramble, that's really funny. [laughter]

It was neat. I kinda enjoyed it.

Now, what else do they do that day beside race beds?

Oh, they have booths around and they have a place you can buy hotdogs and hamburgers, and that was about it. A full day of fun really.

What other celebrations are big here in Battle Mountain?

Well we got the Mosquito Festival comin' up.

Tell me what that is.

[laughs] We're gonna have a parade and we're gonna just have a day in the park, doin' the same as you do on the Fourth of July just about. The parade, I'm not sure what time it'll start, but I'm gonna be carrying colors in it.

And what other kinds of activities are unique to the Battle Mountain area?

Well, right now we got the Fourth of July is a real good day here, which it is all over the country, but the Fourth of July, the bed races and Mosquito Festival, and that's about it, then Homecomin'. We have a Homecomin' day.

Tell me what you do on Fourth of July.

We have a parade. Everybody's in the parade. After the parade breaks up, they go to the park and spend the day in the park shooting balloons and throwin' eggs at each other. Whatever they decide.

Are there fireworks?

Oh yes. The night of the Fourth of July there's always a big fireworks display put on by the Battle Mountain Fire Department.

Do you want to tell us any more about your growing family? I know your wife died. Did you ever marry again?

Yes, I married Mary Proctor. We were together a couple of years then we got a

divorce and I married Debbie. We have one little seven-year-old boy—six-and-a-half years old. Then we got a divorce. I'm presently single, but I enjoy 'em. I get along good with all of em.

Good. Anything else about your life that you want to share of interest that we might not have covered?

Not really. I've been a truck driver, and Marine, and a commissioner and what have ya' and I've really enjoyed my life.

When I came in, you had some lovely music on and you told me that you collect records. Tell me about that, and you collect hats. Tell about your hobbies.

I collect records. I been collectin' 'em since I as a kid. I've probably got over a thousand records, I would say. I've never counted 'em but there's a lot of 'em. An hats, I've probably got five hundred hats. I got hats you can't see. And I don't know why I collect 'em, I just do. I like to have ones with funny sayings on. I like those.

And you have a fascinating environment. You took me around and I'm going to get pictures of it. Do you want to tell us anything about your amazing home and how long you've lived here?

I've lived here ten years in this house. The kids didn't have anywhere for any activities, and I tore a big building down where the VIP is now, it was called the Happy House, and I was a lumberer and some of the roof I utilized it and built a room for the kids to use.

Now what kids?

Karate kids are the young kids taking karate classes and I have....

Wait. Back up to karate. How'd you get into karate?

The lady that had karate classes asked me if she could use the room.

Oh, okay.

I told her "Yes, go ahead." And the lady that does clogging asked me if she could use the room. I said sure, and she's got probably fifteen students out there, and the lady that has belly dancing, asked me if she could use the room, and I said, "Sure." So, I have the VFW meetings there, American Legion meetings, karate and the whole works. They all come. It's a busy room. It's being used constant.

Now is that just out of your kindness to everyone? Do you rent it out to people who might want it for a party? How do you do this? Everyone would want to use it.

It's not for rent, it's free.

In other words, if somebody that you think it's a good cause and a place for kids, you're especially interested in kids, aren't you?

Right, yes, for kids' use. No, it's free. I don't charge anything.

Amazing. Do you do the belly dancing or clogging?

I took a belly dancing class. I have taken belly dancing—opened my big yap and the girls [chuckles] made me go through the class.

Do you sit in and watch some of this?

Oh yeah. I can sit here in my little window and watch 'em. Some of those gals, they have an exercise class back there and they told me to get lost one day. [laughter]

Well, you've just given so much to this community, it's just amazing. We're going to get a lot of pictures.

I've got a youth center I'm workin' on also. And I'm instrumental in building the Battle Mountain Race Track raceway. And I'm instrumental in the youth center. I've donated a lot to that and the golf course—I've donated a lot to that. And on the Rock Creek, I built a lot of road out there free of charge.

You certainly are living a life of contribution to Battle Mountain, and I'm glad that we could record it 'cause I'm sure a lot of people now and later won't know all that you've been doing. Before we close to take pictures all around this place, and look at your photo collection, is there anything else you want to say? Of course we can always add some later, if you say "Oh, I forgot to tell Sylvia..." but is there anything else right now that you haven't told me?

No, I've been very happy living in Battle Mountain. I think I'm gonna stay here the rest of my life and I've enjoyed it and my main concern is to make a nicer place to live. That's one reason I liked being a commissioner. It's kinda hard. We're workin' on our museum, and our Civic Center. We got a lot of things we'd like to do, but it takes money to do it.

You mentioned something that I do want to ask you about because I am excited about the

fact that you're going to develop a museum. I've met with Lori [Bennett, president of the Lander County Historical Society] and encouraged her and they are including where you'll have an archives, too, where we will eventually put up all this oral history. Tell me a little about it. Are you on the historical society committee?

Yes, I'm on the historical society. I'm on the senior advisory board, historical society, the tri-county development, and I'm on about anything there is to be on, I think I'm there.

So I would say you never have a dull moment. You're never lonely.

Takes a lot of my time, yeah.

So back to the museum and the historical society, which I think is so wonderful and so important. What are some of the plans and when do you think that will start?

As soon as possible. Probably, hopefully within a year.

Wow.

I hope, I don't know.

Wonderful. I'm thrilled about that, and of course they'll be the recipients of all the things we're collecting for the oral history project.

There's a lot of things. Bruce Swackhamer has a lot. Eleanor Lemaire has a lot. I have quite a few things as well.

Well, I'll watch that with great interest. I'm just thrilled to hear your story and learn more about you. I'm going to thank you on behalf of yourself because the Lander County Oral

History Project is such a success because of people like you, and it's been a great pleasure for me to get acquainted.

I wish we'd started a few years ago because we missed a lot of good people. We got Bernard Cole in the hospital and he can't tell you anything and Marion Fisher died. He had a lot of history. I'm gettin' to be one of the older guys around town that knows much about the mining industry around here that can talk about it. I do know most of the mining areas. I could you tell you a lot of stories that could take a lot of tapes to fill! [laughter]

Well, what we'll do is take some photographs and look at your pictures, hope we can copy some things and so I'm going to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, and if we think of more later, we can always add it.

Yeah, any time. Any time, you're welcome. I enjoyed talkin' to ya.

* * * * *

Note by interviewer, Sylvia Arden: After ending the interview, Mr. Elquist took me on a tour of the area, including property owned by his family which later was subdivided and became a major part of the growth of Battle Mountain. Therefore, I asked him if we could continue the interview to record that important information.

You just took me for a little tour, and I have some more questions to ask that you didn't tell me and I didn't know to ask. First, you were showing me the property that you have, and mentioned the land you bought in the

subdivision. So I want you to tell me now, when you bought the land and when you started the subdivision and a little bit about it.

I bought the land I think it was in 1980, and in 1981 and 1982 we subdivided it and sold it off in lots. We paved the streets. It's Broyles Ranch Subdivision is the name of it. There used to be a Broyles Ranch here, when I was a kid.

Okay, so this in on Broyles Ranch. When you bought it in 1980 did you say?

I believe it was that year, I'm not sure.

Was land lower-priced then out here? Was this way out in the suburbs kind of?

Yeah, this is out in the suburbs. This is out on the edge of town. There used to be an airport, little airport right here.

And you said "We." Who bought it with you?

My brother Bob, my father, and a friend of mine from Reno, Ed Douglas.

How many acres?

There was fifty acres.

So you subdivided and sold lots?

Yes, uh-huh.

And what's on those lots now?

Housing. Put a bunch a Boise Cascade houses to start with.

What kind?

Boise Cascade, they were pre-fab home—came in and were set off on foundations. They were made in Boise, Idaho.

And what else beside the houses? What else did you do with that?

What do you mean?

Well, I think you mentioned a church?

Oh the church, yeah the church next door is on the ground. My father—well the family kinda donated most of it to 'em.

I see, and then did you say you had roads built?

I built the roads first and that was my part.

Was there water and electricity?

No, no, we put water and electric and sewers in, over the whole subdivision and carbon gutter, blacktopped streets.

Now about how many lots—are most of them with houses on them now?

Yeah, most of 'em have homes on 'em

Were they individually-designed and built, or did someone come out and put up a lot of houses?

They're all Boise Cascade pre-fabs. We put the foundations in and they brought the houses in and set on 'em.

Did you sell the houses on the lots or give them the option to buy the house?

We just sold the lots. The people come in and put the houses on the lots.

But you were selling the houses too?

No, we didn't sell the houses, but we sold the lots to the people to put them. One fellow come in and put a bunch a Boise Cascades on 'em.

I see. He bought a lot of the lots.

Yes.

And about how long did it take before those lots and houses were up?

Oh, it was all in one summer.

Really?!

We had the roads done and the water and sewer in and the foundations. About one summer.

Who were the buyers?

You mean the buyers in town?

No, who were the ones who bought the lots and bought the houses? Who came in to buy all that? Who moved in?

People from everywhere [laughs], but we sold 'em to a fella in Winnemucca—about ten lots—and then these low-income, high-density lots we sold to another company and they put high-density, low-income housing on 'em—apartments—and I can't remember the name of the fella who bought the lots. That's been quite a few years ago.

Now you said there was low-income housing that was built on some of the lots?

Yes, we had some high-density lots they put low-income housing apartments on.

Who's "they"?

Western States, they're called.

Did they get some incentives from the federal government?

Oh yes, it's subsidized by the federal government.

Who moved into those low-cost housing?

Mostly low-income people. The majority of 'em are. Ya have to have very little income to get in there.

Would that be some of the senior citizens?

There are some seniors in there, yes, uh-huh.

And did any of the mining companies buy the lots?

Echo Bay bought a buncha acres from us and they put their own in, off of our ground. Paul Krow at the Colt bought a bunch of acres.

Pardon, what was that last?

Paul Krow at the Colt Truck Stop, he bought some acreage from us also.

And then I see adjoining your huge complex—mobile home and added on rooms—there are a couple other big mobile homes. Did you put those on, or has someone brought those onto your lots?

My mother moved next door, and when she died, my sister got it. And then the ones in back are mine. I kept an acre here for myself, or for the family, so to speak.

When I was walking around your house after the first part of the interview, I learned that you had children with your first wife that we didn't get onto tape. So I want you to fill that in. Your first marriage—tell me the children you had, and how long you lived with them in Reno, and then when you left Reno to come here, did any of the children come? Tell me a little about that part of your family.

I had three children with my first wife, Pat: Michael, Debbie and Dennis. Dennis lives here in Battle Mountain. Debbie lives in Reno, and Michael died.

Let's go back to how many years apart were they, and were they with you all the years, did you raise them, or were they with their mother? I'd like you to get that information to me of their names and where and when they were born. Now did you live with them? Did you raise them through their childhood or were they with their mother?

I raised 'em 'til they were of age to be on their own, yes.

When you moved to Battle Mountain, were they already out of the home?

Oh yes. They were all out of the home.

How long were you married, that first marriage before you came to Battle Mountain?

Close to thirty years.

Oh my goodness. And you have grandchildren now?

Yes, I have grandchildren. I have one grandchild in the Marine Corps, Camp Lejeune [North Carolina].

Now tell me which of your children are the parents when you tell me about your grandchildren.

Michael, my oldest son, had a child named Aaron, and he's in the United States Marine Corps in Camp Lejeune at the present time. My daughter had a boy named Kevin, and he's a Sparks auxiliary policeman at the present time. Dennis has a daughter named Kristen and she's an eighth grader, and an older daughter by another marriage of his wife that's approximately twenty-three and she made me a great-grandpa the other day.

Oh, my goodness. Now where do these people live? Where does this family all live?

Debbie lives in Reno, Dennis lives here, and Michael's gone. My younger son is J. Daniel Elquist. He's at the present time here with me.

That's the young boy whose six?

Yes.

So you have a nice, big family and I just wanted to catch up with that on the tape. Anything else that you didn't tell me?

I have a baby four months old. His name is Jared.

You have a nice big family.

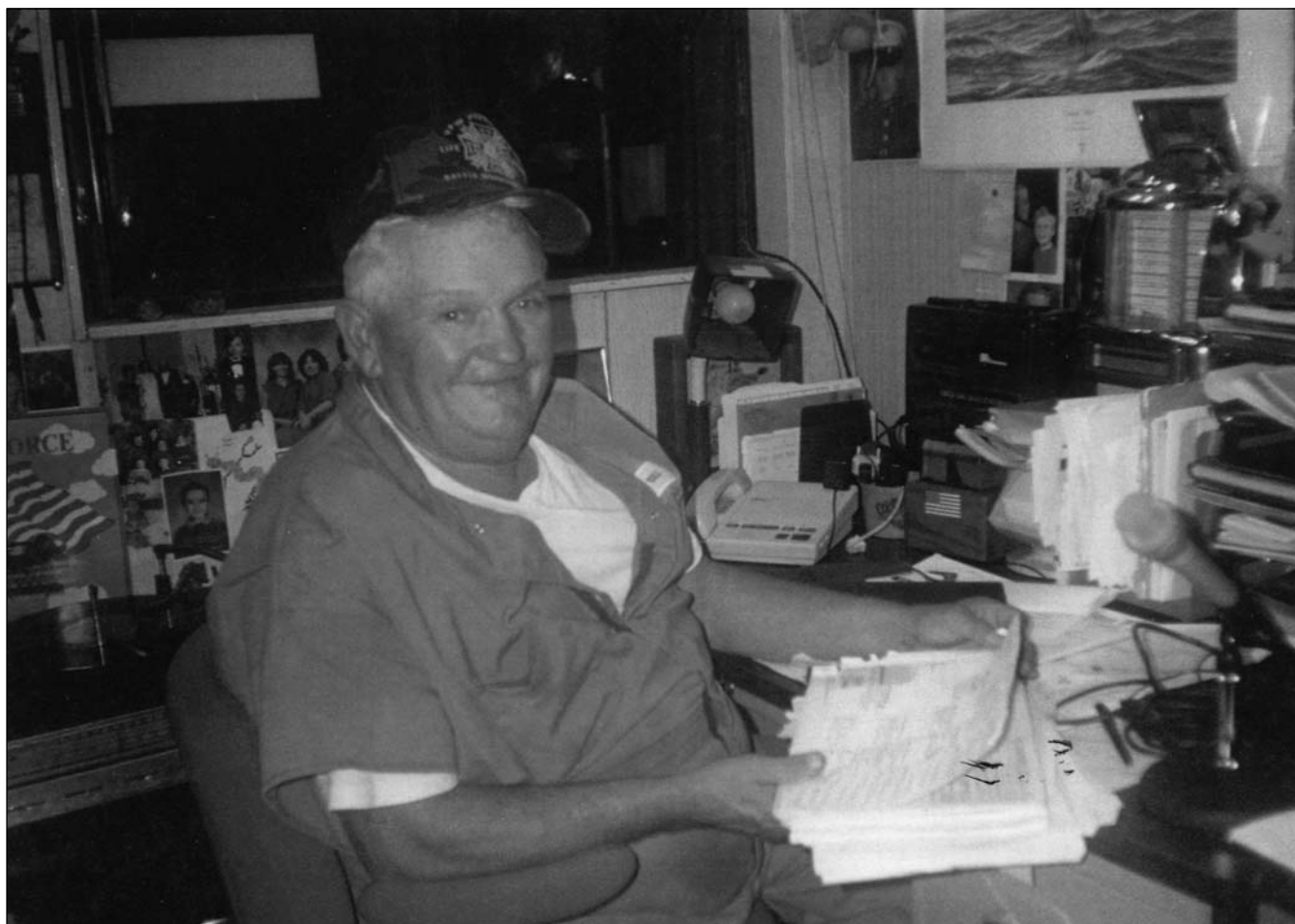
Yeah, pretty big.

Anything else that we didn't cover?

I think that pretty well covers it.

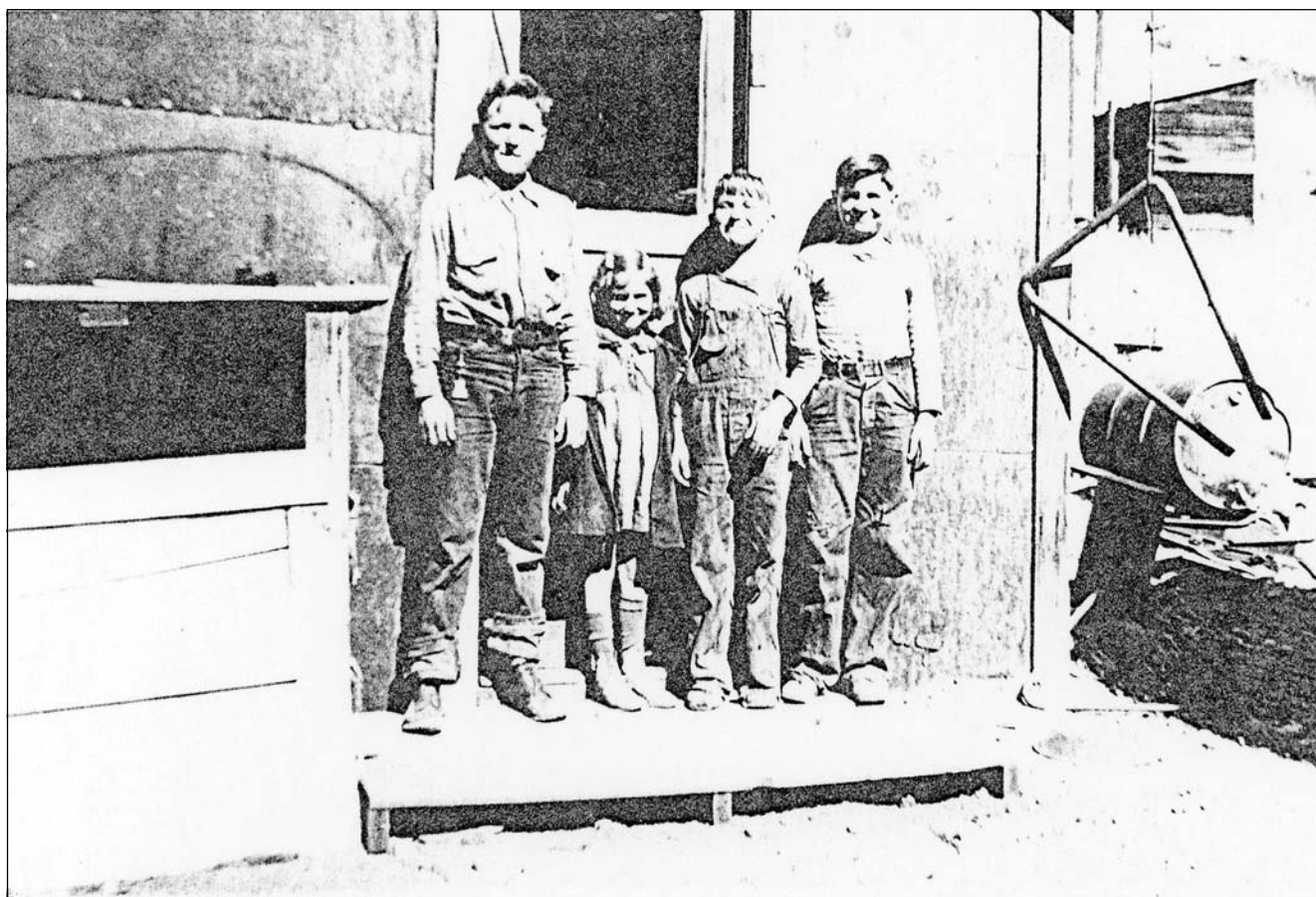
I want to thank you for your interview, and especially for your support of the Lander County Oral History Project as County Commissioner. Thank you so much.

BILL ELQUIST PHOTOGRAPHS



BILL ELQUIST IN HIS "HOME OFFICE"
AUGUST 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Four unidentified children standing on the steps of a building.

Unforgettable VFW Fashion Follies



Two of the charming models at Saturday night's fashion show were Commissioner Bill Elquist and Airport Board Chairman Don Smith.

Imagine, if you can, Commissioner Bill Elquist in drag. Close your eyes and let your mind soar. Picture him in a brown, loose curled wig, wearing a knee length, pink pastel, shoulder strap gown. To complete his ensemble, he wore black, mud splotted boots.

After you have this picture increase it by seven times. Now you have an idea of the Battle Mountain VFW Spring Fashion Show. A night that some people will never forget in spite of how hard they try. Last Saturday night was an evening of genuinely unique entertainment.

Held at the Civic Center, the VFW Spring Fashion Follies was the first spring activity for the local post. Developed as a fund raiser for the several

See Page 4

Fashion Follies

From Front Page

charities the post helps sponsor, the show featured models in swimwear, lingerie, and sportswear.

However, these were not your ordinary models. Master of Ceremonies, Curtis Watson and Bubba Gates introduced the fashion plates as "eight of the most grand and glorious models you've ever seen."

The models were: Bob Fifi Phillips, Kelly Nelly Downs, Don Juan Smith, Bill Golden Tongue Fletcher, Bill Silver Fox Elquist, Snuffy the Camel Laughton, Roger the Politician Olsen, and Maxwell Smart Lenaburg.

During a brief intermission, Curtis Watson tried to put all of this show into its proper perspective. "I just can't believe we've had so much talent being hidden under levis for so long," he said. "I

haven't seen flesh like this since...Let's just say I've never seen flesh like this."

Organizers of the fashion show included members of the VFW and the ladies auxiliary. Publicity vice president, Ms. Alice Leonard, explained that the show will hopefully evolve into an annual event.

"We've had a great deal of fun with this project," she explained. "The dress rehearsal was more fun than the actual event. I just hope we can do it again next year."

BILL ELQUIST
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

PREFACE

Rose Filippini's grandparents, Michael and Rosa Rozzi Chiara, were born in Italy. They came to America in 1860, crossed the country in a covered wagon, and settled at Rose Creek, Nevada, twelve miles from Winnemucca. Rose's father Frank was born there. In 1882 the family homesteaded twelve miles southwest of Battle Mountain, establishing the Chiara Ranch.

Rose's mother, Ermida Lammari, was born in Italy. She came to stay with her brother in Carlin where Rose's father, Frank Chiara, worked with Ermida's brother on the railroad. Frank fell in love with her and they married. Rose was born in 1909 at the Chiara Ranch.

Rose's mother died when she was only two years old. Her grandmother had to take care of her and her older brother, but needed help. She sent money to bring over a young woman from Italy, a sister of an Italian boy working on a nearby ranch. Rose's father and the young woman from Italy fell in love and

married within six months. Frank took his family to the Hilltop Mining Camp where he worked in the mines. When it was time for the children to start school, the family moved to Battle Mountain where Rose's dad got a job at one of the nearby ranches and also continued to work in the mines. Two more children were born to the family.

Rose knew at a very early age that she wanted to be a school teacher. She was part of the first Battle Mountain High School graduating class in 1924 and started her first teaching job at a one-room ranch schoolhouse near Fallon. She was only eighteen. For the next six years, she taught at several ranch and mining town schoolhouses in Nevada.

Rose gives a vivid picture of camping, swimming in the Humboldt River, fishing and hunting with friends at the Altenburg family camp. She and Henry Filippini, part of this group, fell in love and married when she was twenty-four. They bought a cattle ranch twenty miles from town, had two sons, and lived and worked there for ten years. She describes getting up at 5:00 a.m. to cook for

about fourteen hay men who stayed in the ranch bunkhouses during haying season.

Their boys started early to help on the ranch and worked very hard. They especially loved riding the horses. They became interested in rodeos at an early age and started to participate in community and high school rodeos. The family would travel to Colorado and all over the West where the Filippini boys started to win awards in major rodeos.

Rose's grandsons and granddaughters had their own horses and learned to ride when they were very young. The cowboys needed help getting the cattle in from the range and the girls liked to ride, so they decided to go out with the men and help. Their dad took them along to the rodeos and they followed in his footsteps, participating, and winning awards. Most of Rose's family are still ranching, with the women and girls working alongside the men.

Rose Filippini is a very vibrant and active woman who lives alone in her charming family home in Battle Mountain. She has an active social life and enjoys playing cards, especially pinochle which she learned to enjoy with her friends at the Altenburg family camp.

Rose has a very close relationship with her growing family, who all live nearby, and now includes seven grandchildren and ten great-children. They all enjoy time together at her vacation place on the Wild Horse Reservoir, sixty-five miles north of Elko, where the fishing is good.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Rose Filippini at her home, at 196 W. Second, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on March 16, 1993.

Hello, Rose. It's nice to be with you, and thank you for agreeing to interview for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you first please tell us your full name, and where and when you were born?

Rose Filippini: My full name is Rose Marie Filippini. It used to be Rose Marie Chiara. It's an Italian name. I was born December 16, 1906, at my grandfather's ranch, which is nine miles south of here. They called it the Chiara Ranch.

Can you tell me where your mother and father were born?

My mother was born in Lammari, Italy. And my father was born in Winnemucca, Nevada.

Can you tell me the names of your grandparents and where they were born?

Well, they both came from Switzerland, which was on the Italian border, and they spoke Italian.

Did they marry before they came here? Did they come to the United States together?

My grandmother Rosa Rozzi, was born in Marundo, Italy, near Turin, and married Michael Chiara, also a native of Italy. They came to America, crossed the country, settling at Rose Creek. That's out of Winnemucca.

Did you know your grandparents? Were they alive [when you were born]?

I didn't know my grandfather, but I did know my grandmother. She took care of me after my mother died.

When your parents came—and you said they settled near Winnemucca on a ranch—did they homestead? Do you know that?

My grandmother worked for a Dr. Jearau in Winnemucca. I don't know whether that [spelling] is right.

When your mother and father came here from Italy, did they know English?

My mother came from Italy, but my father was born in Winnemucca.

Tell me first about your father—how much you know about his life before you were born.

Well, he worked on a ranch. Men were hauling ore out of Hilltop and they would stop with their horses at the ranch and my father and my uncle fed them, took care of them, and my grandmother cooked for them. They rested there for the night and then came on in with the load of ore the next day.

Do you know what kind of transportation was used then?

Just horses and big wagons.

Do you have any idea as to the time period? Was this in the late 1880s?

Well, yes, it was in the late 1880s, because my father and mother—she came to stay with her brother in Carlin, my mother did. She had a brother in Carlin. And my father had a sister in Carlin. They worked at the railroad and my father just fell in love with my mother and married her.

Let's learn a little bit about your mother. Was she born here?

No, she was born in Lammari, Italy. And her name was Lammari, Ermida Lammari.

Do you know anything about her family coming over? Did they know your grandparents in Italy, or did they come separately?

They came separately.

Was there an Italian community in this area?

Quite a few people that worked on the railroads, you know.

Did they hear about the work here back in Italy? Did any of the companies advertise? Or how did they know to come here?

Well, my mother's brother came over here, and he brought his wife with him and they had children. The children went to school. And then my mother came to stay with my uncle and she and my father were married.

Do you know how old or young they were when they married?

Well, no, I don't, but I might maybe can figure it out.

When they married, did they continue to live at the ranch?

Yes, they did.

Did your mother share in the ranch chores with your grandmother?

No, my mother was not very well. She had something in her throat, and the doctors didn't know what it was, and it killed her. She died when I was only two years old.

Were you the first child?

No, my brother was. The picture is up there.

Were you too young to remember her?

No, I didn't remember her.

When she died, there were you and your brother and your grandparents and father?

They were at the ranch.

Were any of the other members of your uncle's family also living there? Like your uncles and aunts that might not have been married yet?

Yes, there were several aunts that were not married yet. Bob Chiara's father.

The first things that you can remember about your childhood—I want you to tell me whatever recollections you have of your life there with this family and from your own recollections what you remember about the ranch, about the people, and about some of your activities as you began to move into your childhood—let's say ten or eleven—but start as early as you can remember.

Well I remember that we moved to Hilltop after my dad and mother were married. Dad wanted to get away from the ranch, and he worked in a mine up there. Mother could not speak English—my step-mother—and we could not speak Italian.

Wait a minute! I don't know about your step-mother! You need to back up a little bit. We need to learn who that was and when he married her, because the last time I left you, your mother had died and you were just a

little girl, and your grandma was taking care of you. So let's move on then to how old you were and who your dad married and how that came about.

Well, there was a ranch not very far from my grandmother's ranch, and there was an Italian boy working there. And she asked him if he had any sisters in Italy that could come over and help her take care of my brother and me. So he said, "Yes." She said, "Alright, I'll give you the money, and you send it to her, and she can come over." Well that was my mother, see.

You mean that was one of those things we read about or see in movies, sight unseen?

Uh-huh, that's right.

How old were you at that time?

Well, I wasn't going to school yet. But she couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak Italian. And we wanted—we were hungry, see. We were asking her—I still remember this. We asked her for bread and butter, and she didn't know what we wanted. So when my dad came home—he could speak Italian, you know—so she asked him in Italian what we meant by "brick o' butter, brick o' butter." He said, "They were hungry!"

Were you like maybe four or five?

About four.

How do you perceive the marriage of your father and your mother, which was an arranged marriage?

Well, I was too young to know that.

But later, as you began to be aware or even maybe not aware, but how did it seem in the family that their relationship developed?

Grandmother sent her the money, see. So when she got here, my father just thought she was great, so they fell in love and he married her, six months after she got here.

Oh, I see! Excuse me, when your grandmother sent for her, to take care of you both, it was only as a helper, not as a wife?

That's right, just as a helper.

Okay, I understand now. So then he did fall in love with her.

Yes, and he married her and they moved to the mine. Dad worked at the mine, and my brother was older than I—he was two-and-a-half years older—so he started school up there. Mr. Swackhamer's father and his wife had a boarding house up there, and Mrs. Swackhamer taught my brother.

You mean kind of like private tutoring?

No, she taught school up there, just a little rural school.

So that you became friends way back in those years?

Yes.

Now tell me your earliest recollections of life there and just tell me whatever you can remember as you began to get older, your recollections of life at the mine camp, and how long you lived there.

Well, I don't know how long we lived there. I know that when I was old enough

to go to school, my father moved us to town here [Battle Mountain] so that we could go to school, Battle Mountain School.

Did he then commute to his work?

Well, he got a job at one of the ranches around here, and worked in the mines.

Now, when you say "Worked in the mines," do you know what kind of work?

Well, they just drilled and got the ore out. They used to have a railroad into the mine, and cars that you put the ore in, and had to push it out.

Did your dad and step-mother have children, so that there were more in the family?

Had two, a boy and a girl.

And how old were you when they were born?

Oh, I was about six or seven.

Did the family all mingle as one family, since you never knew your mother? Did you accept your step-mother just as your real mother?

Yes. Oh yes, I was young enough to accept her. I didn't realize she wasn't my mother.

Tell me about your family life here in Battle Mountain. First describe, as you began to get into school, what a typical family day was like—because I'm sure it was different than from today.

Well, we had to do our chores before we left for school: made the beds and helped clean up the house and do the dishes, and have our bath and get to school.

What time did you have to get up?

Oh, I imagine it was around six o'clock.

Did you live close? Did you go to the school where the courthouse is now?

Yes!

And where did you live?

Right across the street in a little four-room cabin, right across the street.

Now, when you say "across the street," you're on Second; was it near where you live now?

Yes, just across the street.

Was the house already built? Or did you have it moved or built?

No, it was already built—it was just a ramshackle thing, but it had four rooms in it. We got along.

Now, when you started school, do you have recollections of what your school days were like?

Well, in those days, there were a lot of Indians in the school. And the first thing I got was *lice* from the Indians, and my brother did too. And my father kept us home from school—he was working in the mines—and washed our heads in coal oil every day. So that's why I don't have much hair on my head. [laughs] But there were a lot of Indians then that went to school. They were kind of... Well... wild. Old-fashioned Indians, you know.

Did they have any opportunity at home? Had their parents gone to school? Did they speak

the language? And were they able to learn the subjects you were learning?

Well, it didn't last long. The school board arranged for a private school for the Indians, and they hired a teacher, and she had all the Indians over across the lot from us.

So there was not interaction between the communities in those early days?

No, although we played with them on the playground. You know, games and things like that.

In your classroom—and I'm talking now about the early elementary days—about how many children were in your classroom?

Oh, I imagine about twenty or twenty-five.

Do you have any recollection of the kinds of subjects or activities in your school day?

There were no activities—you just went to school and learned your lessons and went out on the green, played at recess, and went home.

Did you pack a lunch, or go home for lunch, or did they have a cafeteria?

Oh, no, we went home for lunch. We didn't have any lunch [at the school], nothing.

I see that a school is named after Eliza Pierce, and in reading about the history here I read such complimentary things about her. Were you ever a student of Eliza Pierce?

Yes I was, until the third grade.

Can you tell us a little bit about her?

Well, we thought she was a great teacher, and she was very kind. And she was very strict too, and you had to do what she said and mind her.

Did you have a close group of friends that you played with, or later as you got a little older, that you did activities with in that early school period?

Well, we all played together, you know. Played dare base, run across the street [chuckles] and have somebody out and tap you. Then you had to stay out there and tap somebody else. You got everybody in the middle of the street. [laughs] Those were the games.

Now, as you moved into your teen years, going into junior high and high school...

No junior high school—just eighth grade to high school.

Okay, let's say in the eighth grade, did you start to have special activities like clubs? I don't know if you started to dance that early, or music groups or a band?

No, nothing like that.

I know the boys played baseball, but I doubt if girls were allowed to then.

No, we didn't play baseball. No, that was for the boys.

Okay, let's move into high school now. As you moved into your high school years, did you begin to develop special areas of interest in school work leading to thoughts about what you might want to do later?

Yes, I did. I wanted to teach school. And it so happened that whenever a teacher was

sick, Miss Pierce would get me to sit in the teacher's desk and keep the kids quiet and help them with their lessons.

So you were a born teacher! How old were you when you started this?

Oh, I was in the seventh or eighth grade.

Amazing! So tell me about the gradual development—did you become a teacher?

Yes I did.

Follow me through on that from your start of high school.

When I graduated from high school, I took the teachers' examinations. In those days, you didn't have to go to normal school—you took teachers' examinations, and if you passed, you got a certificate, made of eighty-some percentage, you know, on the test. And then the next year, I got a first grade certificate, up in the nineties, so that I could teacher upper grades. I taught in this school.

When you say "this school," you have to tell me, because they won't see you pointing.

Well, we had a grammar school there, then they built the brick building where the county offices are. That was where I started in the eighth grade.

You taught eighth grade?

No, I started school in the eighth grade.

And when you got your first job teaching, how old were you?

I was eighteen. I had just graduated from high school.

That's an amazing stow! From there, tell me what it was like your first day of teaching, and then moving on that first year, the number of children, and what it was like.

Well, the first school I taught in was out at Fallon, Nevada. And I had nine pupils, one in each grade—except the second grade, I had two in the second grade: one in the first, two in the second, and then one in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth.

So you mean that was like a one-room schoolhouse where you had to teach different things to the children?

Oh yes.

How did you learn to teach all different grades?

Well, you just had your books. They studied their books and you asked the questions.

As such a young woman, how did you manage to go and move to Fallon?!

Well, I went to summer school first, to the University of Nevada. I spent six weeks there and took courses, and that helped me to do what I was supposed to do in the schoolroom.

But then when you had to move to Fallon, tell me how you did that and where you lived. I lived with an old couple and they had a little girl. He had a ranch about nine miles out of Fallon. The school was about a mile-and-a-half from where I lived. I lived with these people, and I had to walk to school every morning.

Do you remember the name of the people that you lived with?

Harris.

Did they close the schools when there were heavy snows?

It didn't snow very much then! We never had very much trouble.

You were teaching, you were a very young teenaged woman and living out at the ranch—did you have time for a social life, as such a young person?

No, I didn't! [chuckles] I lived out on the ranch. I knew some people in Fallon, and I used to go into Fallon and spend weekends with these people. But I didn't have any social life, really.

You didn't have any fun?

Well, no! Well, these people that I lived with had a little girl. I used to take care of her. This woman raised turkeys, and she had six hundred turkeys and she had to take care of them and I took care of the little girl.

Was that part of the deal for your housing?

No, I paid her forty dollars a month for my room and board.

You just did it out of your...

It was something to do.

Did you come home much, back here to Battle Mountain?

Not very often. You had to take the stage, you know.

Now let's go back to that, that you had to take the stage. Tell us the transportation.

Well, I was living out of Fallon and had to take the stage into Fallon. And then you had to get a bus from Fallon.

Describe to people who don't know what a "stage" is.

Well, in those days, it was just pulled by horses, you know. There weren't any mechanical parts to it. It was just a stage—well, a buggy, with a back seat and a front seat.

Do you remember approximately what year?

I graduated in 1924, and I went to summer school, and it was in 1924.

Now, that sounds fascinating, because today you wouldn't see a young person in such a mature profession. How long did you stay in Fallon teaching at that school?

One year. Then I got a school out of Winnemucca, and I stayed there two years.

Tell me about that.

Well, I had ten pupils, and two in each grade, except the second grade I had three little Mexicans. And they couldn't speak English, so I had to get back on my Spanish and help them learn English, and they learned English.

I have some questions about that, because I live on the border of Mexico, and we have many, and I was surprised to see a lot of Mexican people in this region. Do you know what brought them here?

Here in this region? Well wages and jobs.

But do you know how they heard about it? This is such an isolated distance from Mexico.

I don't know—just word got around.

And tell me where you lived in Winnemucca and what your life was like there those two years.

I lived out at Jungo. It was a little mining community. And I boarded with a family. I had one boy in the eighth grade and one girl in the seventh grade from this family. I got my own breakfast, but she fed me lunch and dinner and I paid her, you know. And she was very nice.

Did you have any social life there?

Well, yes, they had dances in the saloon.

Did you meet any fellows?

Oh yes. I met men. I didn't have very much to do with them.

Okay, so after two years in Winnemucca, then what did you do?

Then I got a job up here at Dunphy—that's about twenty-five miles east of here—on a ranch. There were two girls and a boy. And they had a family working there, there was another boy. So I had two girls in the fifth grade and one boy in the seventh grade, and another boy in the third grade.

I have several questions: (1) How did you hear about that position? (2) Why did you leave Winnemucca, and (3) What kind of a little schoolhouse was it on this ranch?

Well, they had a little two-roomed place for the teacher to live. And I ate with the family. They were very nice to me.

But still, how did you hear about the job of teaching that you moved from Winnemucca to the ranch, number one; and number two, what kind of a schoolhouse was it?

It was a nice little schoolhouse. There was another girl that didn't go to school—she wasn't old enough—and she used to come in and cut out pictures from books and magazines. Anyway, she liked school. So I just stayed there one year. The head of the school board came to me and he said, "Rose, if you don't get married, we'll raise your salary to a hundred and fifty dollars a month," which was a lot of money then, you know. And I said, "No, Mr. Marvel..." My granddaughter married one of his grandchildren. Anyway, I said, "Mr. Marvel, if I'm going to work with children, I want to work with my own." He felt terrible! He just tried to talk me out of it, but I wouldn't let him talk me out of it.

Now I'm going to back up a little bit, because here you are wanting to get married: You didn't tell me about the man that you fell in love with, and I want to know how old you were when you finally left to get married.

I was twenty-four. And the man I fell in love with had the Argenta Ranch. His folks had the Argenta Ranch, and his name was Henry Filippini.

Tell me how you met him and where you met him.

Well, we met at the ranch. We used to go out to the ranch.

When you say you used to go out to the ranch, you need to tell us that in a little more detail.

Some friends of mine used to go up fishing, and they had a place where they camped. And we used to camp there, just to be camping. And we had a lot of fun swimming and doing things like that, and fishing and hunting. These people became friends, so I became friendly with Henry and he asked me to marry him, and I did!

Let's go back a little bit, because camping in those days, I can't visualize it. Tell me if it was a tent or what.

A tent. They had good beds they had couches and mattresses and carpets on the floor. We had a stove to cook on, we didn't cook on a campfire. They had a real camp.

Now when you say they had a "real camp," was this a tourist camp?

No, no, no, it was just a family camp.

This was the Filippini family?

No, it wasn't, it was the Altenburg family.

So about how many of your friends, how many of you would be there?

Oh, sometimes ten, twelve, fifteen.

Was that weekends?

Weekends, uh-huh.

That sounds like an awful lot of fun.

Oh yes! We swam on the river, and one of the boys hit a branch that was hanging over the water, and there was a bee nest in there. And that bee just bit everybody: bit me

between the fingers, bit me on my head. But the father of the friend of mine who asked me to go camping, put mud on those places where the bee bit, and it was fine.

Did any of the other boys and girls, or young men and women, marry from that group?

Oh, they all got married, yes.

I mean to each other. Did they meet at camp like you did?

No, they didn't. They married different people.

So unfortunately in those days, women teachers couldn't be married, right?

Well, usually when anybody came to town that was new, why the first thing that they looked up was the teacher. [laughs] Oh yes, they got married.

Now, you got married, and tell me a little bit about your wedding and how you established your home.

Well, I was married in Elko at, I guess it was St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and we went to Salt Lake on our honeymoon. We were gone ten days and had a good time. When we came back, why, we settled out here on the Muleshoe Ranch, which is only a few miles from town. We were there for ten years. Then let's see, my husband and I, we bought the ranch out here about twenty miles from town. It was called the Childress Ranch. There were three girls and two boys and the mother and father. They moved to town, and they all chewed tobacco—the girls and everybody! [laughs] Anyway, Henry rented a house in

town for me to stay in, because he wanted to put new floors in the house and get it cleaned up. After he did that, I moved out there.

Tell me what your life was like when you first bought the ranch as newlyweds.

Well, I had children before we went to the ranch.

Well let's back up then, before the ranch. Let's go to when you were first married and you went to the first ranch. Tell me, before you had the children, what your life was like.

Well, it was very sad: I had three miscarriages. The last one, if it had been in this day and age, we could have saved it, because I was seven months pregnant and I fell and hurt myself. The baby was born, I heard him cry, and he lived for several hours. So that was that. Then I got pregnant again, and a boy was born, real healthy and everything. After four years, I had another boy. So I had just two boys. And then I had to quit.

You just weren't built to be a mama of lots of kids.

Well, no, and I wasn't well enough. I had a hard time carrying a child to maturity.

I can see then that you couldn't do hard work on the ranch when you first married.

I never did, no, never did. I tried to ride horseback, but I couldn't it hurt me. No, I took care of the kitchen.

Then you were on the next ranch with your two children. Tell me about life there. Did you buy that next ranch?

Yes, we bought it.

Some of us don't have an understanding of ranching. Tell me what kind of a ranch it was.

Cattle ranch. It was on the road to Austin, and there used to be a narrow-gauge railroad, you know. I can't remember what year the railroad quit, but anyway, Henry bought five miles of those ties around the ranch for firewood, because we had to use either coal or wood. They were full of those spikes [chuckles] that held the ties together, you know. I'd get up and get breakfast, and I'd have to clean out my grate because it was full of spikes! [laughs] You couldn't get the spikes out of the wood—you had to burn it out! Times were rough in those days.

Was there a house already on the ranch, or did you have a house built?

No, there was a house already.

Do you want to tell me a little about it—what the house was like? You probably didn't have too many conveniences—but what your day was like.

Well, I used to cook for the hay men. In those days, they had to hire quite a few men because they did it all with horse-drawn mowers and stackers and all of that, you know. I used to get up in the morning and get breakfast.

Let's go back a little bit. When you say there were a lot of them, first I'd like to know about how many, when you got up for breakfast, and did these men stay at your ranch?

Yes, they stayed in the bunkhouse. They had a bunkhouse for them. I cooked for

fourteen men. And they *ate*, I'll tell you! And they didn't want bacon or ham for breakfast, they wanted steak. So I had to cook steak for breakfast, potatoes and eggs, and toast, and hotcakes and things like that, you know.

What time did you get up to start this?

Oh, about five o'clock.

Where were the boys?

Oh, they were little.

I know, but how did you take care of the boys and do all this? Your sons and all these men.

Well, the men took care of themselves in the bunkhouse.

But you had to cook for them, so how did you manage with two kids and cooking for all those men?

I hired a girl to come and take care of them while I cooked. She used to give them their breakfast and dinner and take care of them: take them out for walks and things like that; put them down for their naps.

I'm sure glad to hear that!

Oh, yes! I couldn't have done it without her help. She lived about three miles down. Henry, my grandson, has the ranch now, about three miles from where we lived. And her granddaughter came up every morning to help me.

Okay, so that's at breakfast. Then tell me, was it cattle and raising hay for cattle? Was there anything else?

No, just raising hay for cattle.

And then tell me, what did you do with the cattle?

They took them out on the range, and let them stay out there until they did the haying. And then when they came in, and when it got cold, they fed them the hay that they cut.

Were these beef cattle?

Yes.

And then where did you sell them?

Cattle buyers used to come to the ranch, you know, and buy the steers and buy the old cows.

Was that a successful working ranch?

Oh yes, my son has it now. He's doing alright.

So then tell me a little bit about your husband in those days.

Well, he just worked. That's all he did, he worked, and he worked hard. But then he developed heart trouble and he eventually died from it.

How old was he?

He was seventy-five.

How long ago was that?

He died May 27, 1975. He was born in 1900.

Then were you still on that ranch when he died?

Yes, we still had the ranch, but he used to go out, you know. The boys were there.

Okay, so tell me a little bit about when the boys were growing up on that ranch. Tell me a little bit about that kind of a life, when they started to help work on the ranch and something about that life.

Well, they started to work on the ranch when they were real young. They just loved to ride a horse, so they used to ride, you know, with the boys. They liked the cows, and they worked. They worked hard.

Did you husband take them hunting?

No, he didn't.

Did they go fishing?

Yes, we went fishing, up at Mill Creek.

Did you ever take time for camping?

No, we camped enough at the ranch!
[laughs]

Tell me about your boys when they reached high school age: Were they developing their interests? were they eager to leave to go off for an education? or the military?

My oldest boy told me one day, "Mama, the prettiest little girl came to school today and I'm going to marry her some day." And I said, "Oh, that's fine." And he did! And by golly, he married her! And they had five children, and all of these girls are his, and one boy. And the other boy went into the Army, and he was someplace in the mid-East United States. I can't remember where he was, but anyway he used to drive big trucks, hauling supplies.

Did he enlist, or was he drafted?

No, he enlisted. And the other boy never enlisted.

The one who got married and had all the children, how old was he when he married?

He was nineteen, and she was eighteen.

Did your other son get married?

Yes, he did. He married a girl from a ranch out of Winnemucca, and they had two boys. When my husband died, he gave one boy one ranch and the other boy the other ranch.

What wonderful gifts!

And the boy on this side got his water from Mill Creek. And the boy over at Carico Lake got his from Carico Lake. They're still on the ranches.

Now when your husband died, what did you do?

I just stayed home.

When did you leave the ranch?

Oh, I left the ranch when the children started school.

You and your husband moved to town here?

Yes, we bought this place. We bought these three houses.

Can you give us a little more detail? Do you know the time period, and were the three houses for the family, or some for investment?

Well, this one was for the family and the other ones were for investment.

Then did your husband commute to the ranch?

Yes, he did.

And did you have help living there?

Oh yes, my son had help.

When you both moved to this house, tell me how your life changed.

Well, we had to remodel the house, put different windows in it and add a bathroom and put in electricity and all of that, because there was no electricity in it. That was it.

Did your husband start working a little less at the ranch as he was getting older?

Yes, he did, he had to.

Tell me a little more, aside from the house, were you finally able to have some quiet pleasures or some enjoyment?

Oh, yes, we always had a lot of fun. We used to go to Elko a lot to dinner and to Winnemucca to dinner, and visit, you know, our friends.

And your sons and their families?

We bought a place up at Wild Horse, and they still have it. Somebody called me last week and wanted to buy it and I said, "No, that's not for sale."

Where is Wild Horse?

That's about sixty-five miles north of Elko. It's on Wild Horse Reservoir. There's a big reservoir there. A lot of people there that just live there and fish in the summertime and fish through the ice in the wintertime too, and then move back to Elko in the wintertime.

Is it a resort area?

Yes, it is.

And then did you go there part of the time for vacation?

Yes, we went up there, oh, every weekend probably.

Did your children and grandchildren go with you too?

Yes, and they go now.

That sounds wonderful.

I wasn't going to sell it, because my grandchildren like it.

Is there a little house?

I have a two-bedroom, fourteen [foot] wide trailer up there. And my husband fenced off the place and dug a well, and so we have our water and electricity and everything, you know.

Do you go there yet?

Oh yes, I went last year. But there wasn't any water in Wild Horse to speak of, so we had to go to Sheep Creek to fish.

Oh, for fishing. Rose, I want to go back a little bit because you told me that your step-mother

and your dad spoke Italian and you grew up in a home where Italian was spoken. Was it a language that you knew from your early childhood?

Well, I just can't remember that. I think that my grandmother tried to speak English to me.

Did your father and your mother—I'm going to call her "mother" now—speak English in the home?

Yes, they spoke English. She spoke English all the time.

So by the time you can remember, she had learned to speak English. Now, tell me a little bit about your parents, because we took you away from home, and then I didn't hear anything more. So let's go back, and tell me... You didn't come back here much when you started to teach, but tell me a little bit about them and how their life went on until they died.

Well, my father was a custodian at the school for a good many years. Mother just learned the hairdresser business by herself.

When your father went to work at the school, when you said "the school," which school?

Grammar school over here.

And how old was your step-mother when she started to learn to be a hairdresser?

Oh, she was probably in her fifties.

Was that something that interested her? Did she ever talk about how that started?

Well, she was always interested in doing things with her hands, and she used to fix my hair. So this woman that used to come to the beauty parlor here called on her one day and told her that she should get some training in it. And she said, "Oh, I just haven't the money to train. I think I can do it. I'll just practice on my daughter." [laughs] And she did! And she did alright. And this woman came from Salt Lake—she was working for this outfit that sold hairdressing stuff, you know. She brought her some stuff and mother paid her for it. She showed her how to use it, and she just learned from there. And she had a big clientele.

Did she open her own business?

Yes, she did.

In her home?

In her home.

That's wonderful!

She had a room built and a bathroom built on her home. Oh, she was the most resourceful woman I knew!

Wonderful. What did your dad think of all that?

Oh, he thought it was alright, as long as she liked it. [laughs]

Were all the children out of the house by then?

Oh yes, yes. My brother went to college and my sister went to San Francisco to nursing school and is a nurse. She lives in Reno. Her husband died four or five years ago. My brother married Bruce Swackhamer's sister. They had two boys and a girl. He was only

forty-two years old when he died. His wife never did marry again. Did I tell you this? About him falling?

No, not the details.

He was dictating to his secretary and he stood up and he said, "Oh, I just feel so weak," and he collapsed with a heart attack. He didn't know it was a heart attack but they called the doctor. That was about 2:30 in the afternoon, and at 5:30 he had another one and he died.

Did he have a history of it?

No!

When you were young, and through the years, especially the early years—were there doctors and medical clinics and places to care for people's health and births of babies?

Well, there was a doctor here—always a doctor here, as far as I can remember. They had a lime place up at the other end of town. It was a home and they made it into a hospital. And that's where my children were born. The doctor just didn't have the facilities to save the seven-month [two months premature] baby.

So you had doctors with your children?

Oh yes.

And a place if they got sick?

Oh, yes.

Were there any dentists here?

Yes, there was a dentist. I had an accident—I went skating and a boy bumped

into me and I fell down on my hands on the ice. And when he moved to get up, my hands slid out from under me and I fell and I broke my two front teeth.

When was that?

Oh, I think I was about in the eighth grade. So I had pivot teeth put in there. Well, I don't have too many of my own teeth, but what I have, they're still good.

Now, I know that you now love to play different card games and you're a very active and very vibrant woman. Tell me a little bit about your life after your husband died and how you then developed your life alone.

Well, I spent a lot of time alone, you know. But my step-mother helped me, and my father and my brothers. But I was interested in my grandchildren at that time, you know. Of course they were a big deal. And they're all just darling.

And they all live pretty close?

Oh yes. Two live out of Winnemucca in Paradise Valley. One teaches school and the other one, her husband is a rancher. He's one of the Marvel boys. Their picture is up there. The rest of them are on the ranch.

When did you start your activities with your card games?

Oh, when we were camping, you know, when we'd camp on the river, we always played cards. I learned to play not bridge, but I learned to play pinochle, and what was the other game?

Casino?

Casino and cribbage and things like that. It's just been the last eight or ten years that I've been playing bridge, and pinochle. And I like pinochle better than I do bridge. I can have more fun playing pinochle than I can bridge. [chuckles]

Now, I want to ask you a few other things. In that earlier period, especially, when Battle Mountain was smaller, where did you get your supplies like clothing and furniture and the things you need to furnish your home? Where did you shop?

Elko and Winnemucca.

So they were larger then, and had everything you needed?

Oh, yes.

As a family, when your boys were still home, tell me how your spent your holidays—because when I was reading some of the history, I read where holidays like the Fourth of July were big deals.

Oh yes, they always had parades and baseball games, you know, and things like that. But my boys were interested in rodeos and horses. So we'd go to rodeos. We went back to Colorado and we went all over.

How did they get interested in the rodeos?

Well, they just like horses and there was a little community rodeo and they'd participate, you know. And then they started to have high school rodeos and they participated and just went from there.

Looking at some of the clippings you shared with me earlier today, I believe it's your

granddaughter and grandsons who are winning awards?

Yes.

Tell us a little about how that started when they were young and a little bit about it, because I'm from an area where you don't see or hear that.

Well, I don't know whether I can remember all that, but they had their own horses, and toy took good care of them. All the girls rode. They learned to ride on the ranch, because they had to work with the cattle, you know, and get the cattle off of the range. So they worked and learned to ride. And then when they had rodeos, why, their dad took them to the rodeos and they had a lot of fun.

You said they were working on the ranch. That's unusual. Tell me about how that was and how that started.

Well, in those days, you hired a cowboy or two, you know. And you always had to have a lot of help. So the girls liked to ride, so they just decided they'd go out and help get the cattle in, and that's what they did.

What ages were they when they worked on the ranch and when they finally stopped doing that?

They still do it!

Oh, they do?! Tell me about their ages and their names.

Well, the oldest one is Marty, and she teaches school out of Paradise Valley. The next one is Kathy, and they have a ranch out of Paradise Valley, and she had twin girls, and then she had another girl. So they live about seven miles from Marty, from her sister. And

they all get along fine. And then there's Dan—Henry got him a ranch just about three miles from where we bought ours—and he's on that ranch. And then Angie and her husband—Angie's husband works for Henry, so he lives on the ranch. And Jill married a boy out of Winnemucca, on a ranch in Winnemucca, and they sold that place, and then they came to live, oh, about three or four miles from Henry, and they have their cattle there.

So the women and the girls work as hard as the men. Now you have great-grandchildren who will probably do the same thing?

I have ten great-grandchildren, and seven grandchildren.

And are they starting the girls—like the twins are now fourteen—are they starting to do ranching?

Oh, yes, they ride. They go to rodeos too.

That's wonderful. Did you become active in any organizations when your time finally permitted?

I just belonged to little clubs, you know.

You weren't an "organization woman"?

No.

Can you tell me, as you lived here and observed the changes in the town, the ebbs and flows as the mines opened and shut: Can you talk a little bit about that affect on Battle Mountain's development?

Yes, it had a lot of affect on it. There's a big mine out, oh, not too far from one of Henry's ranches—it's called "Echo Bay," maybe you've

heard about it. I don't know how many men they employ, but they employ quite a few men. And they figure that if gold goes down any more, and Clinton puts a tax on it, they're going to have to give it up—that's all there is to it.

In the periods when the mines were thriving—the earlier period, I think it was the sixties, into the seventies—when I understand from some of the information in interviews, that they had to recruit men to come because they used up the ones that were around here. What was it like when strangers came into town and a lot of men without families—what was it like?

Well, most men that came to work in the mines had families. They have a big trailer court down here that houses a lot of them. And then Echo Bay had a big living space out there. So they all got along alright.

Did they mingle with the town people who were here? Was it kind of separate social lives?

I don't know. We never did socialize with the mining people.

Did a lot of them stay?

Oh, yes, they stayed until they closed the mines down.

But I mean after the mines closed, did some like it and decide to retire early and just we here?

Some did.

Did new people come? Like I saw some big houses out near the school.

Those houses out that way are for all the miners and their families.

There's quite a few large, beautiful ones.

Yes, there are.

Does that mean that some of them are planning on staying?

I don't know, I couldn't tell you that.

Have there been a lot of changes in the last ten years?

In Battle Mountain? Oh yes! There've been more stores, more businesses, and people seem to get along pretty well.

I noticed a golf course.

Yes, we have a golf course. If I were about fifty years younger, I'd take it up! [chuckles]

Also, in the early 1980s, I've been reading where the county seat was moved from Austin to Battle Mountain and there was a lot of controversy then. From your personal experience and observance, what can you tell me about that change?

Oh, I don't like to get into that. I was glad that they moved the county courthouse down here, because this is where it should be, because Austin was just a dead community. Of course, they think they're pretty good! [chuckles]

Did it change Battle Mountain, having people come from different places now to the Board of Commissioners here? Did it bring an increase of people who work for the county government? Because I attended a Board of Commissioners Meeting and was very impressed with the kind of a formal meeting and the kinds of people: Is it bringing also new people and new jobs here?

Well, I imagine it does, I don't know. I read about these people working—I don't know them, you know, the new people coming in.

So there's nothing that you can observe about that change: not extra traffic when people come here now for licenses?

No, no. I stay home quite a bit. [chuckles]

Before we end this interview, is there anything else in your experience that you can share that would help people wanting to know more about life here in Battle Mountain?

No.

Rose, on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for allowing us to interview you for this project. This is the end of the interview.

ROSE FILIPPINI PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



ROSE FILIPPINI
MARCH 16, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Eliza Pierce, teacher, and students, Battle Mountain, Nevada, 1909.

(Copied from a 1909 postcard owned by Carmen Hinman)

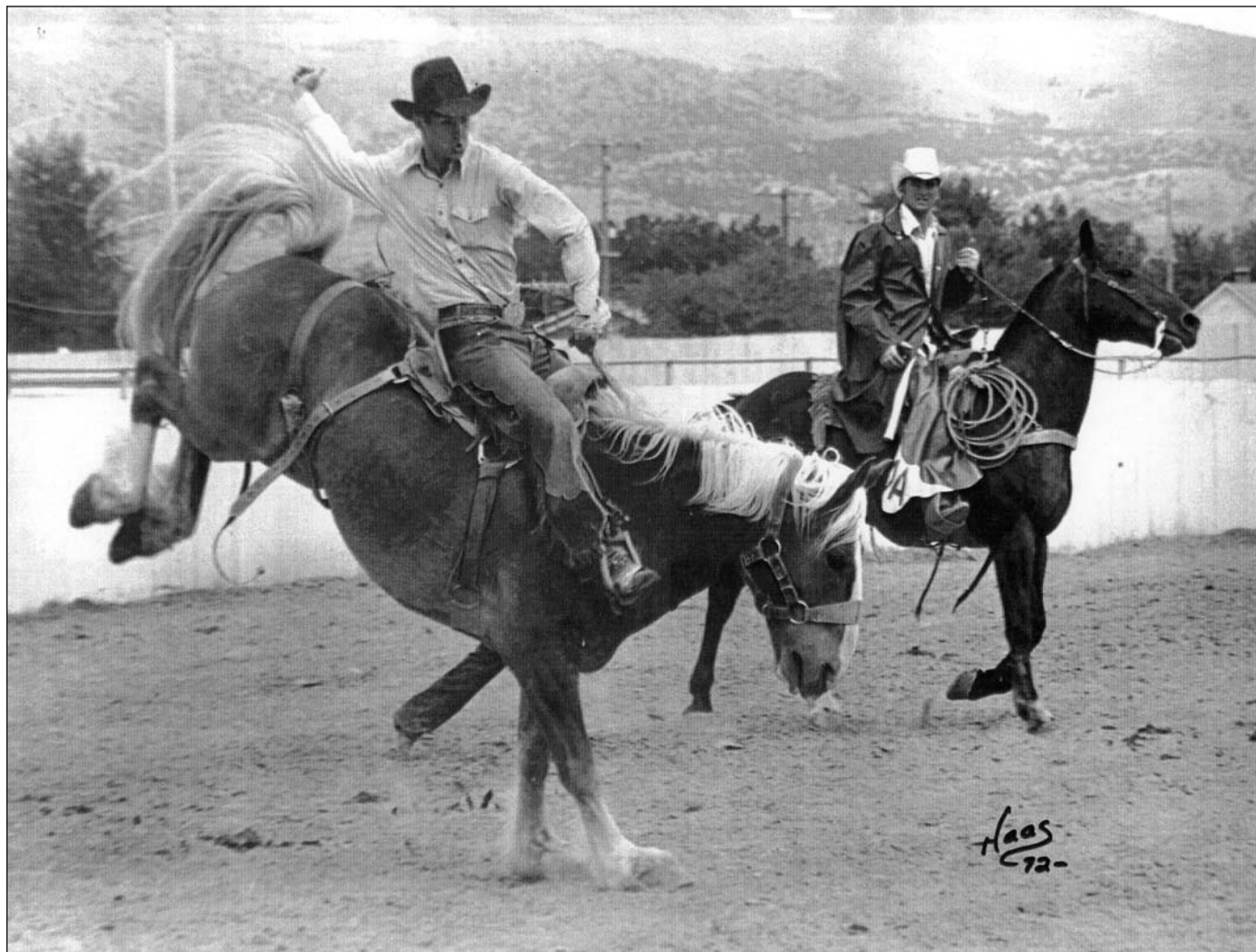


Eliza Pierce, teacher, Humboldt River Bridge, ca. 1900



Summer fun on the Humboldt River near Battle Mountain, Nevada. Right to left: Grace Rose, Gladys Fisher, Marion Fisher, Phillip King, Rose Filippini, Dell Sumen, and Ruth Lamb Reindollar, ca. 1930.

(Original photograph owned by Rose Filippini)



Rose Filippini's grandson, Rodeo Champ

(Original photograph owned by Rose Filippini)

ROSE FILIPPINI
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

PREFACE

Bert Gandolfo's paternal grandfather and both parents were born in Austin, where he too was born in 1911. He was raised on the Gandolfo cattle ranch, with five brothers and two sisters, starting at a very young age to help with the chores. Bert carried water from a spring for the laundry, vegetable garden and home use. He chopped wood and helped feed cattle. He had his own horse, Rawhide, and later helped with the round-ups, branding and castrating the cattle. A tribe of Shoshone Indian families lived on the ranch in tents and helped with the haying. They cut and hauled wood for the ranch from Mount Airy. The Gandolfo children played with the Indian children. Bert tells about school at their ranch, just for their family, through two years of high school. The classroom was in their house where the teacher also lived. Trapping muskrats and coyotes, fishing and hunting were favorite recreation activities.

Bert's parents keep a house in Austin where they would spend a week in town a

couple of times a year. He describes the "big-time" Fourth of July celebrations. Dancing was one of popular activities for families, even the little kids. Ice skating and sleigh riding down the steep Austin streets were popular winter sports.

After high school Bert worked on the ranch, then went into the CCC working on grading and paving roads which led to highway jobs with several companies as roads were being leveled and paved. He also worked with the Forest Service maintaining the roads through the forests. Bert and his older brother were weekend prospectors all over Lander County and had some successes.

Bert describes the businesses and stores in Austin. He met his wife, Lilian, in Dory's Store, run by Lilian's sister. Within a couple of months they were married. They had a son and a daughter. Bert became active in the community. He was a volunteer fireman, and served on the Lander County Board of Education and the Austin Town Water Board. He became involved in the Lions Club and the Chamber of Commerce. Bert was a County

Commissioner from 1975 to 1982 and during those years spearheaded the Austin Park and swimming pool and restoration of the old Methodist Church building which was turned into a town hall. He also was responsible for the paving of the roads in the town. Bert and Lilian built a new home on a high hill called China Ridge overlooking Austin, with views in all directions. Old Chinese coins were uncovered verifying the early Chinatown on that location when the Chinese probably came to work on the railroad and in the mines.

Still a vigorous man at 83, Bert goes deer hunting alone. He did all the landscaping and enjoys working in the yard. Getting out his geology maps and going to different areas to do a little prospecting is also an activity he continues to enjoy.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Bert Gandolfo at his home, in Austin, Nevada, June 21, 1993.

Good afternoon, Mr. Gandolfo. I'm happy to be here to interview you this afternoon, and can you give us your full name?

Bert Gandolfo: Bert T. Gandolfo.

And where were you born?

Austin, Nevada.

And what was the date?

April 6, 1911.

Can you tell me anything about your paternal grandfather, your father's father?

No, I never knew him.

Do you know where he came from?

He came, originally, from Florida.

Where did your paternal great-grandparents live? Did they come from another country?

I don't know. We don't know where they came from.

No record?

No.

Do you know about your mother's parents, your grandparents on your mother's side?

I knew my grandfather.

What was his name?

Antone Maestretti.

Where did he live?

He lived right here in Austin.

What brought him to Austin, do you know?

He come originally to what they called Smith Creek. He had a ranch at Smith Creek, Lander County. And then he moved from there to Austin and run a grocery store.

Do you know approximately what year he came to this area?

Around 1900.

Was he married when he came?

Yes.

And do you know where he married your grandmother?

It was while he was at Smith Creek, I imagine.

And then tell me what is your father's name?

John A. Gandolfo.

And your mother's name?

Ida Louise Maestretti.

Did your father tell you much about his childhood?

Quite a bit, yes.

Can you tell me anything about him? Did he live in Austin all the time?

My father, yes.

And what did he do here as he grew up?

He run the mail, in later years, out to what they called Alpine in Churchill County. When he was a young man, he had lived with a rancher out in Reese River, and he had cattle out there. And then he did odd jobs. He worked on building, helped build Stokes Castle.

Is that right?! Did he tell you anything about Austin as he was growing up, what it was like?

Well, even when he was growing up, it was pretty wild. He wasn't very tame himself!

[laughs] Tell me what kind of a man he was. What were some of the things he did?

What kind of things?

Well, like you said, things were wild, and he wasn't very tame.

Well, one time, the sheriff was taking him to jail because he had his friends in there, and they was all drinking. He knocked the sheriff off of the block wall in front of the courthouse, so he ended up in jail too!

How old was he then?

He was in his twenties, I imagine.

Did he tell you anything about school here in Austin? Where did he go to school?

He went to school right here, but I never remember him ever saying anything about it.

Did he talk much about his parents, his family life? Did he talk very much about his early years?

No.

You said you knew your grandfather?

Yes.

How old were you when he died?

He died in September of 1940.

Oh, so you knew him. You were grown. What kind of a man was your grandfather?

In what regard?

Well, did he communicate with you? Did he tell you lots of things? Was he active in the community?

Well, no, he didn't ever say much about his past life. I don't believe he was too active in the community. When he moved here, he run a grocery store, and then retired from the grocery store.

Was the grocery store here as you were growing up? Did you know that grocery store?

No.

That was real early?

Before I was born.

What did he do during the years you knew him? What kind of work did he do?

Nothing, he was retired. He lived to be ninety-nine years old. He would have been a hundred years in December—he died in September of that year.

Oh, my, that's amazing! Had your grandma died before he did?

She died in about, I think, 1921.

Where did he live as an older man?

Right on this same street, only to the east.

Did he have his own place?

Yes, his house.

Really?! He didn't have to live with anyone?

Oh, no, he lived alone in his house right up until he died.

So he was an amazingly independent, strong, man?

Oh yes.

And what were some of his interests? What did he do with his time? He had a long retirement, since he lived so long.

He didn't do anything, that I know of, other than smoke his pipe in the evening.

Oh really?! [laughs] When you were little, did he play with you or anything?

No, he wasn't that kind of guy.

What was your grandma like?

I hardly remember her, because I was born in 1911 and she died in 1921. We lived on the ranch out in Reese River, and she lived here in town.

So now we're going to go to your mother and father. I guess they both were born here and grew up together?

Right.

Did they tell you about their wedding or marriage and how old they were when they married?

Yes, some.

What did they tell you?

At the time they got married, my mother's father and mother—father, anyway—didn't care too much about the wedding.

Why?

Well, my dad was thirty-five years old, and my mother was twenty.

Oh! So he stayed single pretty late for that period, didn't he?

And like I was telling you about the deal with the sheriff, he was kind of a little wild—he drank quite a bit.

Did they finally consent?

Oh, yes, they was married in the Catholic Church in about 1905, I think.

And how long after they were married were you born?

I was born in 1911, which would be six years.

Were there other children in the marriage? Any brothers or sisters?

There was another five brothers and two sisters.

Oh, a very big family! Where were you in that line-up?

I was third down the list.

Wow, that's a very big family! Now, where did you all live? Did you move as the family grew, or where did you live here in Austin?

We had a house here in Austin, over on Court Street. When they first got married, and later in 1911, the year I was born, why, they got the ranch that we lived on, and it's still under the name of, and operated by a Gandolfo.

Where is that located in relationship to Austin?

Right out here to the west on the old highway going to Fallon.

How many miles out?

It's about eleven miles.

And is that where you grew up?

Right.

I want you to go back to your very earliest memories on the ranch—maybe you were five or six when you first remember, I don't know—and tell me your very earliest memories of what it was like on that ranch. And what kind of ranch it was.

It was a cattle ranch. We raised hay. We didn't have any planted hay, but it was all wild meadow hay. And then we had another little ranch six miles to the north, that they called that Skunk Ranch.

The Skunk Ranch?! What did they call the ranch you were born on?

That was just the Gandolfo Ranch. It's been known as that all these years.

I want to, again, have you go back to your earliest memories. What was the house like that you lived in?

It was an adobe house with a dirt roof

A dirt roof?!

Right.

Was it there, or did your family build it?

No, it was already built.

By the people your father bought the ranch from?

Yeah.

And can you remember anything about what the inside of it looked like: how many rooms and what it was like?

Yeah, we had a pretty big kitchen, a front room, and four bedrooms.

Oh, it was a big house!

Yeah, pretty good-sized, yes.

You didn't have plumbing yet, or electricity?

Oh, no, no.

So did you have an outhouse?

We had an outhouse and we carried water to the house.

Where did you carry the water from?

We had a spring right there, off the river a little ways.

How far did you have to carry it, about?

Oh, maybe two hundred feet.

How old were you when you had to start helping carry water?

Well, probably five to six years old.

Just as a little kid?

Yeah.

Can you tell me what kind of animals, beside the cattle? Did you have chickens? Or what else did you have on the ranch?

Chickens, pigs and turkeys and Angora goats.

Oh my! Did you have a horse?

Horses, yes.

How old were you when you started riding?

Oh, probably seven or eight years old.

Did you have your own horse?

Oh, yes. I broke my own horse in later years.

What was your horse's name?

One that I had mostly was Rawhide.

Rawhide, that's a good name! Now, when you were growing up, what were the earliest chores you had to do?

Well, we all did...One of the deals in the house, we had to help with the dishes and clean the table and stuff like that.

So your mom didn't discriminate? The boys did the same as the girls?

Right.

Smart mother! [laughs]

Uh-huh.

Did the girls also help on the ranch?

No, mostly they stayed pretty well in the house.

And did the laundry and things?

Yeah.

How old were you when you started to help with ranch chores?

Oh, from the time I was probably ten years old.

Did your dad take you around? Who did you learn with?

With my dad.

Were there other workmen on the ranch?

We always had, when we were smaller, one man, generally, around the ranch.

Would that be someone who lived at the ranch?

Yeah, he lived right there.

Was he like a family member? Did he eat with you?

Yes.

What was his name?

Joe Armour.

Tell me about how many head of cattle you had.

We generally ran between three and four hundred.

Oh, that's a lot. Did you help with the rounding-up of the cattle?

Oh, yes.

What about the branding? You did that too?

Oh yes.

How did you brand? There are different methods, I understand.

Oh, we'd just have somebody roping the calves, somebody tail the calf down, put a rope on the back legs and stretch it out and they put the branding iron on it and it had two dulaps on the front.

Two what?

Two what they called "dulaps" on the neck: one cut up and one cut down. Then they had ear marks, but I don't remember the ear marks.

Is there a copy somewhere of your cattle brand?

I don't know who's got it—it was with the State of Nevada, yes, at that time. But I think in later years, they let it go.

What was your role in the branding? Did you do actual branding?

Well, I did roping, and I also did tailing them down and holding them, sifting on the head. Then in later years, brand and castrate and doing the marking.

Did all of you boys share duties on the ranch? Did the boys all work with your dad?

Yeah, pretty well.

What else can you tell me about the ranch that might help me see what it was like? Were there busy seasons? Did you have any disastrous times with droughts?

Oh, yeah, that happened all the time.

What would happen when there was a big drought? Did you lose animals ever?

Well if it was a real dry year, we'd probably sell a lot of them off, and then build back up again. But it was always a hand-to-mouth proposition.

Never got to a point where it was...

No, never did make any money—but enough to live on.

Did you grow your own vegetables? Were you self-supporting?

Yeah, we had a fairly good garden. We had to carry water for that garden.

Oh, gosh! And dairy cows for your milk?

We always had a dairy cow, yes.

Now let's get to school. When you got to be school age, where did you go to school?

We had a school right there on the ranch.

Really?!

Yeah.

You had enough children to warrant the teacher, is that it?

Yeah.

Can you remember your first experience? Did the teacher stay at your ranch?

Yeah, they lived right there.

In your home?

Yes.

Was there enough room?

Yeah, we always give them an extra bedroom.

Can you remember your first teacher?

I think he was a man, Toughy Laird.

Was he young?

Yeah, just came out of high school here in Austin.

So you knew him? [laughs]

Yeah! [chuckles]

Did you respect him as a teacher?

Oh, yes! You bet your life!

Now, did they teach you right in your house, or did they...

No, we had a little room, what they called the schoolhouse. One end was the cellar, and was adobe house too. And the other end was a bunkhouse at one time, but in later years, when we got doing the work, we didn't have the hired man, so we didn't need the bunkhouse for him—made a schoolhouse in there.

Now was that just for your family, the schoolhouse?

Yep, that's right.

Just your family?

That's the only ones that went there.

Can you remember what it was like in that one-room schoolhouse?

Oh yes!

Describe it.

Well, the first teacher I can always remember, Toughy, he'd come to town on weekends and have a great time. One time we looked in the desk and here was a bottle of whiskey! So the fire went out and he's over there pouring some of the whiskey in the stove to start the fire. We always laughed about that! [laughter]

Well, that's better than passing the bottle around to the school kids, right? [laughs]

Oh, yeah, we never touched it.

Was he a good teacher?

Fair, yeah. Not bad, you bet.

How many years did he teach there?

He was there, I think, only one year.

And then someone else would come?

Yeah, we'd get another high school graduate out of the high school here. But in later years, when we got up towards high school, for seventh and eighth grade, why, we had most of our teachers come from the University of California.

Really?!

Uh-huh.

Now, how long did you go to school in this little one-room schoolhouse?

We had it approved by the state that we could have two years of high school.

So you went to school at the ranch until the second year of high school?

Two years high school.

Was it still just your family? Or did other families move in?

No, just us.

Always just your family. So you didn't interact much with other kids?

No, no.

At least in the early years.

Yeah.

Was it hard, studying just with your brothers and sisters? Was there rivalry?

Oh, no. We got along pretty good.

What did you all do for fun?

Well, there wasn't much fun about it—we just made our own fun, if you wanted any.

What were the things you liked to do for fun as you were growing up as a young boy?

Well, I never remembered much about it—just playing around. When I was real young, I started trapping muskrats and coyotes. We didn't spend much time monkeying around—we were just trying to make a dollar.

Uh-huh, working most of the time?

Yeah.

Did you go fishing? Did your family fish?

Yeah, we used to fish all the time.

First I want to know where you fished, and what you caught.

Well mostly, it was chubs. The called them chubs—fish about six or eight inches long. And then we had some catfish early. They slowly died out, the cattish.

Was that something you really looked forward to, so you could cook it for meals?

Yes, we cooked them up, you bet!

Did you go hunting?

Oh yeah, we'd hunt ducks. And then when we got big enough, we hunted sage hen, grouse, and deer.

Was it your dad who took you and taught you?

No, my older brother.

How much older was your older brother, than you?

He was only about two years older.

And how old was he when he started to be able to hunt with a gun?

About twelve or fourteen.

Oh, okay, so you were teenagers.

Oh yeah, we were teenagers.

So you were about twelve when you started to go hunting with him?

Yeah.

Did you like that?

Oh yeah!

Where would you go to hunt the deer, let's say?

We'd go on the Toiyabe Range and Big Creek, Birch Creek, and maybe the head of Kingston South.

That's beautiful country.

Yeah.

What were the restrictions? How many deer could you catch?

I'd get one.

One each season?

Yeah.

Each one could get one?

Yeah.

And then who took care of preparing this deer for your food?

We'd do it.

And your mom would cook it?

Yeah.

In those days, what did you use for refrigeration in the summer to keep things cold, do you know?

Just a kind of a sack, cabinet, maybe with, you know, water seeping down the sack inside and the wind blowing through. And that would keep things cool.

Even in the summer?

Yeah.

What did you use for heat?

We'd get wood. There was a tribe of Indians that lived right there on the ranch, there when I was real young. And they, in the summer or winter when they wasn't working too much, they'd go to what they called Mount Airy on the Shoshone Range and get pine nuts and live up there. And they got the wood out for us, cut the wood. In the fall we'd always spend maybe three or four days and haul the wood to the ranch.

Now, tell me more about this Indian tribe.

Yeah, he was supposed to be the chief. They called him Joe Gilbert.

Now, were they on your ranch, did you say?

Well, in the summer, they'd come and hay there. We'd have probably twelve or fourteen people pulling up hay.

Oh, so they were hired to work?

And they mostly all would be Indians. And the old chief, Joe, why, he'd order them around.

Would they live on your property in tents?

Oh yeah, right, you bet.

I'd love some pictures. Do you know if there are any pictures around?

We didn't ever get a picture.

No one ever did?

I never remember a picture.

Did they bring their women and children with them?

Oh, yeah, they had their whole families.

Did you feed them?

We'd feed them. When they were working, we'd have a big dinner—or not dinner, but lunchtime.

Your main meal was dinner at lunchtime?

Lunchtime, yeah. We had a thing built outside to break the sun, and the Indians hauled that out at this table. The Indians never ate, at that time, with the people.

Did the women help with any of the work in the house, like the laundry?

No, very seldom.

Was this common at the ranches to have them come and help work?

Yeah, all the ranches up and down Reese River had a band of Indians or group of Indians that made their headquarters there.

Where were they from? What tribe? Do you know?

They were Shoshones.

Did they come here from another area?

Oh no, they come up right from here.

When you were little, did you ever play with any of the Indian kids?

Oh yes.

Or was it kind of separate?

No, no, we always... Later years, when they grew up, when they got bigger and we were breaking horses, why, a couple of the Indians were real good horsemen.

So did they help throughout many years on the ranch, while you had it?

Oh yes.

That's interesting to know. Did your family do things together? Did you come into Austin very much?

Well, maybe a couple of times a year. We'd always come in the fall of elections or some other times. You know, in the fall, we'd come and spend maybe a week in town.

Where would you stay?

We had the house that my mother and father had when they got married at first.

Did you come to the Fourth of July celebrations I've read about?

Oh yes!

I read where Austin used to be the host for Fourth of July, and they'd come from all over.

Oh yeah.

Describe that holiday here.

Oh, they used to have, well, what you'd call a big-time. They had foot races, and nail-driving contests, and for the ladies even. And long races for the men up the mountain, and foot races for the kids.

Did they have firecrackers, fireworks?

A lot of fireworks. On Fourth of July morning, they set off the blasting powder, twenty-one times, right here on the hill, at five o'clock in the morning!

When you say "here on the hill," here where you live?

To the south, just right on this ridge right back there.

Where did they hold all these races, what part of town?

Right on the main street.

Was that a street that was unpaved then?

Unpaved.

The train came through?

Well, the train come earlier. This was later, after the train.

Would people come from all over?

Oh yeah, there'd be lots of people. There's a couple of hotels, and they'd be full. People would even sleep with the other people.

Would they be camping with their trailers somewhere too?

They had no trailers!

Oh, they had no trailers! [laughs] What years are we talking about?

That's way back in the late teens and early twenties [1910s-1920s].

That's interesting. And at that time, what did Austin look like?

Well, more of the buildings was all standing, and in pretty good shape. Up and down the street everything was pretty well intact.

And what was the population, about? Was it more than now?

Well, I don't think there was.

Did it look different? Because now the hills where the mines were are like great big ant hills. When did that all happen?

Well, that started in the eighties, for the mines up here.

Now, you say "eighties." Do you mean...

In the 1880s. Then it was up until, I think it was about 1915, most all the mines on Lander Hill closed down.

Did you ever get into any mining activity later, mining claims and mining?

Yeah, I become a weekend prospector.

Did you? Where did you prospect?

All over this country.

All over the county?

Oh yeah.

Did you have any luck?

Well, right at this time, we got a group of claims out here, that we have a good exploration company on, trying to come up with one of these gold mines. But we don't know what they're going to do. They drilled last year, and they're going to drill again this year.

Did you have any luck before now?

Oh, we made a few dollars selling claims. We got twelve patented mining claims in what they call the Ravenswood area.

Was that silver? gold? turquoise?

It was copper. They were looking for silver, but...Then we bought them up. Then we have about eight tungsten claims that we have a good showing of tungsten. But tungsten since 1955 has been real weak.

Did you do any of the mining yourself?

No, I never did.

You would go and someone would do the work?

Me and my older brother had most of these claims.

I understand every year you'd have to do a certain amount of work to keep the claims.

Well, we'd go out and do digging on the surface, and sampling and digging on the veins. In later years, we'd hire a bulldozer to go out and maybe open up something that we thought looked pretty good.

Over those early years, were there mining activities where people would come in for a while to work? Or was it pretty quiet after that?

Well, there was always somebody looking, you know, and wanting to look at your property. We've had other companies come in and sample and look and do a little work and drop off and leave it.

Now, coming through your ranching years, you said you went through the second year of high school?

Yeah.

And by then, who were the teachers?

Well, I don't remember.

Were these the teachers now from the university?

Yeah. They had to be able to teach high school.

What were some of the subjects that you were taking?

Well, regular high school subjects.

Did you begin to find areas of your greatest interest, and things that you hated, and things that you liked, in your subjects?

Oh yes.

What were they? What were the ones you liked best?

Well, I was pretty good in math. I kind of always liked that. I hated English. And Spanish—the teacher would end up crying pretty near every day. [laughs]

She'd end up crying?

Yeah, trying to get me to pronounce a word. Yeah. I went to school, first and second grade, here in Austin, before we got enough kids to get the school. See, I was the third one. When we got the fourth kid, we had enough to get a teacher.

Okay, you needed four kids.

So up until that time, I went here, I guess until about third grade, here in Austin.

How did you get here?

We lived here. My dad would stay out on the ranch, my ma would live in the house here.

Oh, okay, so you could go to school here.

Yeah.

Now, through those years in high school, what was your life like as a high school kid? What did kids do in high school here? What did they do then?

You mean in Austin?

Well, in high school you were taking two years out at the ranch, right?

Well, it was just the same as the other, only you could do more work on the ranch when you were older.

And also, there were no other kids—just your brothers and sisters?

Yeah.

Did you at that time, when you were in high school, going to school there, were you old

enough to come into town and have friends here? Were you driving?

Oh yes.

Tell me about your life outside of school as a teenager. Well, I used to know a lot of the kids in here, because as I got older, we'd spend more time around town, you know. I had a lot of friends with the kids here, right here in town. Some other people here wanted me to come and live with them and go to school here, but I figured I had enough education.

And as a rancher, you didn't have to get math and science.

Yeah.

So, did you start dating? Did you start going with fellows and girls?

Not at that time. Well, some, yes.

Did you go to dances?

Oh yeah, that was one of the main things.

Tell me about it. Where was it? What kind of dancing?

Most of the dances was in what they called the Austin Hotel. First they used to have it in the International: upstairs they had a ballroom up there that we danced in there. That's when I was really young. But in later years, when I was grown up enough to dance, why, it was up in the Austin. There were people here by the name of Millie and Bert Acree that did all the playing.

What kind of dances? Did you do square dance, or waltz?

Well, just the old dancing. You know, at that time, it was waltzing, two-step, and fox trot and all that.

Did they do square dancing?

In later years, after I got married, why, we did square dancing.

But not as high school kids?

No.

Was the dance for everyone, all ages?

Oh yeah, you bet.

Families? Little kids?

They'd have dances in the fall and in the spring they'd have a couple: a masquerade dance, and then they'd have the Seventeenth of March was always a big dance.

When was the masquerade? Halloween?

It was in February.

Oh! Nothing to do with Halloween!

No.

What other kind of things? What would you do, let's say, in the winter? Did you have winter sports?

Down there, we ice skated.

Where was that?

We had two or three big dams, that we had pretty near an acre of water in each one.

Where was that in relationship to Austin?

It was right at our ranch. A lot of times, when we got older and doing a lot of skating, why, we'd have a lot of the kids and even grown people come from Austin out and ice skate at the ranch.

What did you use for ice skates? What were ice skates like then?

Well, they was just plain. When we first started, we had the clamp-on type, and then later, why, we bought the shoe type.

Did your parents ever dance? Did they ever go to the dances too your mom and dad?

My mother did, but my dad never...

Did they ice skate?

No.

Did you go sleigh riding?

When we was kids here, yes.

Where would you do that?

Right here off of any of these streets.

Wasn't that dangerous?

Well, it was—a lot of kids got hurt.

That was pretty dangerous? anyone ever get hurt bad?

Oh yes, some kids.

Anyone get killed?

I don't think so, no, but they got really crippled up.

What would you use for sleds?

We had regular sleds. And then they had the big bobsled here, way back in the early days. The grownups, they'd go up on the summit and run that thing through town. A lot of them would end up down here with broken legs.

Oh gee! What did it look like?

It was a big long thing about fifteen feet long—seat about twenty people on the thing.

And one would sit behind the other and their legs around?

Yeah. And all would ride that thing down through town, and end up down here in a pile.

Oh my gosh! Did you ever do that?

I never did ride that, because that was going on before I was very old.

Did you ever get hurt riding the sled?

No.

Now, going back again, staying in that time period while you were still in high school or shortly after: Where did your family buy supplies and things like shoes, or the sleds? Where did you get the things you needed?

We'd get them right here in town. They had a good dry goods store.

Whose dry goods store?

It was run by Hogan. It was in what is known now as the old Austin Hotel.

That burned down, I know.

Yeah.

Could you get your shoes?

Oh yeah, they had shoes, boots, and overalls and shirts. They had a real line of dry goods—real good.

How long did that store last?

Well, it lasted up until, way up until after I was married. The guy that had it, had so much old stuff in there, there was a movie outfit come in here and bought all the whole stock and loaded it up and moved it out.

You're kidding! [laughs] Did he sell the store, or close it when he got too old, or what? What happened to it?

Well, Mr. Hogan died, and then the younger ones had it. They run the bar and the restaurant and closed the store.

Oh, I see, in other words they also owned a restaurant and bar?

Yeah.

What was the name of that?

It was the Austin Hotel.

Oh! Okay, so they owned the Austin Hotel and this other business. So they were probably of a higher economic level in town.

Uh-huh.

Was there any place in town for the kids to go for ice cream? Where would they congregate?

They had an ice cream parlor.

Do you know the name of that?

I don't remember the name, but I can remember way back when I was just a kid they had the ice cream parlor—always had it.

I read in my research on Austin that this is one of the rare places in Nevada where there was a vote to make prostitution houses and gambling, other than the few slot machines, illegal. Do you remember any of that? Or was that before your time?

Well, I don't think they ever got it in, because as I grew up, even after I got married, they had honky-tonks here, whore houses.

Did they have other kinds of gambling, besides the few machines? Because I don't see any tables.

Oh, they'd play poker. Poker was a big deal. They never played Twenty-one or anything like that. The gambling was all poker.

Because I read that this is one of the few towns where you don't see big casinos. Is that because it's so small, or the miners aren't here?

Well, the license fees and everything like that would—you would have to get some business.

Was there ever any bigger casino or anything like that, in your time?

No, in that time you could have a Twenty-one game or poker game and there was no

licensing. It wasn't illegal at that time. It became legal in 1935, I think.

What was it like during Prohibition?

Well, that was kind of a joke.

[laughs] Tell me about it.

They had bootleggers all over the place, and what they called speakeasies. They had them, and all you'd have to do is knock on the door and they'd take a look at you through the peek hole. If you was alright, why, they'd let you in.

I thought that was only in the movies!

No, that's real.

That was here?

Yeah.

Did they have different names instead of bars? What did they call the places?

Well, generally, I don't think they had any name, because they didn't want the "Pro-hi's" [ed: people in favor of Prohibition] as they called them, to know anything about them. Having a name would lead them—there might be a place here, but... They'd operate these things for years here.

Oh, okay, I wondered about that. After you finished your schooling, did you stay on the ranch and work the ranch?

No.

What did you do then?

Well, I went into a CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp.

Where?

Out of Ely at Duck Creek.

Did they come around telling the boys that you could join? How did you learn about it here in Austin?

Yeah, they gave out the word.

How old were you?

I don't know, I think I was about twenty-two.

That's way after high school.

Yeah.

What did you do right from high school?

Well, I worked on the ranch and worked for other people when there was no work on the ranch.

And what year did you go into the CCC?

That, I think, was about the time I went in. I think it was 1922.

In Ely, what did you do with the CCC? What kind of work?

Well, I got on what they called a grader, right away. I knew some Forest Service guys, so they put me on running a blade on there.

Not knowing what a grader and blade is, what kind of work?

It's a machine that had a blade on it that you graded the road.

Oh, you were working on roads?

Yeah, we was working on the roads.

They were paving roads then?

Yeah. They had teams of horses there, doing the grading, and I had this old what they called a “motor patrol,” one of the first ones to come out with a motor on it, but no brakes!

No brakes?! [laughs] What did you do?!

Well, I always had it under control.

Now, were these roads that had just been dirt, or gravel before?

Yeah, just trails. We widened them out.

Was this the beginning of the paving of the roads in the region here?

Well the region where we worked up in that area, the roads are still there, just maybe gravel.

Did you live in Ely?

We lived out in the CCC camp.

About how many fellows?

There were two hundred.

Two hundred?! Any that you knew? Any from town here?

Yeah, there were six of us from here, and about four or five out of Eureka, and then it was kind of a local thing. The rest was out of Ely, because that town was on the slump right then, at that time.

Was that the first time you'd been to Ely?

Yes.

How did it seem, coming from here and going with so many fellows and working? Did you like it?

Oh yeah. Yeah, it was alright. I'd get homesick.

Would they let you come home?

Yeah, we'd come home once in a while, get maybe three days off, something like that.

What did they pay you?

A dollar a day, and food.

Clothes? Uniforms?

We'd get the pants and shirts, I think. Yeah, we got Army issue stuff.

Did they give you any time off? Did you have time in Ely, on weekends or evenings?

Well, yeah if they didn't catch you on K.P. [ed: kitchen patrol].

It was like the military!

But I was a machine operator, so I never did do any K.P.

How did you learn to be a machine operator?

Well, like I say, this guy on the Forest Service knew me and so I got on.

Did they teach you what to do? show you what to do?

Oh yeah.

Did you like that?

Oh yeah. I learned enough in there, I come out of there, and worked for a lot of other contractors.

Oh, gee! How many years did you stay with that?

Well, I was in only six months. I came out of there and came back here, and there was a main highway job over what they call Hickison's Summit, to the east of Austin. I got on there, running their main grader. I did all the leveling of the grade that they was building, and leveling the gravel.

So your CCC was responsible for that?

Yeah.

Did you see them advertise, or they knew about you? How did that happen?

Oh, they had a regular office—working office, or whatever they called it. You'd report in there, and then the company picked you out of the...

Oh, so you went and registered for it?

Oh yeah.

So you didn't sit back waiting for things to happen—you went ahead.

Yeah.

How long did you work with them?

I worked from October 'till April, until we finished the job.

And then what?

Well then I worked for different companies. Nixon, [Storey County] the pavement that's on, that was the first pavement on these roads.

Really?! Now where was that?

Well, I worked three or four different places.

I mean, was it right around Austin?

Yeah, out here over where the old highway is from Railroad Pass to what they call Camel Creek. It was about twenty miles. I was a swing man on the motor patrols there. They had four motor patrols, and we was working ten hours. And I would work two hours on each motor patrol.

Now you have to tell us what swing.

Swing man?

Yeah, what does a swing man do?

Everybody would get eight hours. You know, you'd have to take two hours off, and I'd work on that man's blade. And then the next guy, I'd get on the blade and take him off, and he'd set there for two hours. So the job was running ten hours with one swing man.

I see, you took the place of people when they finished the eight hours.

Yeah, I'd start in maybe at eight o'clock, and at ten, I'd get right on the other blade and tell him to take his two hours if that's what they told me to do.

Okay, and that was working on the road?

Yeah. I'd run all the different types of graders.

How did you like that work?

It was good.

What was the pay like then?

Well, it was around seventy-five cents an hour, on the blades.

How long did you work in that job?

I worked there from early spring until the middle of summer

Where did you live when you were working on these jobs after CCC? Did you live back at the ranch?

I just lived here in town. I'd come back here to town.

Did you live in your grandparents' house? Where did you live?

In my grandparents' house.

Oh, your parents house. They kept the house here?

Yeah.

Were you living alone?

No, one of my brothers was, I think, living with me.

Did you do your own cooking and stuff?

No, I was eating in the restaurant.

What did you do about your laundry?

I'd send it home and pick it up once a week.

And how were your parents doing during this time on the ranch?

Well, they wasn't doing much.

Because of the economy, or because of their age?

The economy was down.

The Depression?

Depression years.

Tell me about the Depression years, how it affected your family.

Well, you didn't have nothing, period. You were lucky to get enough to make a dollar to get enough flour to make some bread.

Was that because you couldn't sell cattle?

Well, at one time, they were selling good cattle for five dollars a head. So what do you think would happen to somebody that...

It costs more than that to keep it!

Oh, yeah.

Did they sell the cattle then?

Didn't sell them all. Finally we sold them all, and we had sheep for maybe seven or eight years.

Did you make more with the sheep?

No, it was still a loss.

Still?

Hand-to-mouth.

So were you helping your family?

Yeah, I used to tend camp. Every week you'd go to the herder and take him grub.

Oh, the sheepherder's camp, I see what you mean. Was that for other people who had sheep, or your own?

No, for our own.

How was Austin during the Depression?

Oh, it was terrible!

Did people leave?

Well, they couldn't leave. Where would they go? What would they do? They had WPA (Works Progress Administration) work, you know, started.

What kind of work did WPA have around this area?

Oh, they were putting in the new water lines and developing the water works.

Did you work for WPA?

I never did. Because if you had a job on WPA, and somebody was hiring, why, they wouldn't look at you.

They looked down on that?

Well, I don't know what the deal was, but anyway, I never did work on there. Instead of working for WPA, I worked for the Forest Service quite a bit in the summertime.

When did you start with the Forest Service? How old were you?

Well, I was married at that time.

Oh, well let's back up a little bit. How old were you when you met Lilian and decided you were going to get married?

I was twenty-four.

That was just shortly after CCC?

Well, it was about two years, I think.

Where did you first meet? At school?

No, her sister was running a store, and she was in the store.

And what store was that?

I think they called it Dory's Store.

Was her sister working for the store?

No, she was running the store. And she come here to visit.

And where did Lilian live?

With those people, with her sister.

Here in Austin?

Uh-huh.

So how did you meet?

In the store, I think.

How long was it after you met her that you started courting?

Oh, I don't know, maybe a month or two.

How long did you go together before you got married?

That was in the spring, we got married in November.

So it wasn't very long?

No.

Had you known her before?

No.

So you married at twenty-four, and where did you live when you first married?

Well, we lived at the ranch until we fixed up the old house.

Who was living on the ranch when you went to live there?

Well, most of the family—all but my older brother.

So you went there to live with your family.

Uh-huh.

Were you working the ranch then, or doing Forest Service work?

Well, it was Forest Service work, and whatever I could get.

When you said fixed up the "old house," were you referring to your parents' house here in town?

Uh-huh.

Were your parents still living then?

Yeah.

That's right, your dad lived a long, long time. So then what was your life like as a newly-married couple? Was it still a struggle here, or were you beginning to move along?

Oh, it was hand-to-mouth.

When you started to work for the Forest Service, what kind of work did you do?

Mostly on the roads.

Like what? What would the Forest Service be in charge of? Roads through the forest?

Yeah, maintenance. In the summer, maintenance, stuff like that—running the machinery and doing hand work.

What was Lilian doing during that period in the early years of your marriage?

I think it was ten months after we were married she had our son.

Oh, that kept her busy! Do you call him Ted?

Yeah.

And how long after that was Roberta born?

Eleven years.

Oh, a long time! Okay. So there was one child to support too. So what was your life like in Austin then, as a newly-married couple with a baby?

Oh, we always had a good time.

Tell me what kind of things you did.

Well, we'd go to the shows on Saturdays.

Did you do that when you were single, before you married?

No.

What did you do with the baby?

We'd take him to the show.

What kind of shows, and where were they held?

We had a regular movie house.

Where was that?

Right where the Owl Bar is right here.

What kind of movie house?

It was built into a regular small movie house. A guy out of Ely come over and lowered [the stage] and raised up the seats just like a regular show.

Really?! What happened to it?

Well, it got so when TV come in, that ruined the movie house.

And what else would you do as a family?

We'd travel around, go fishing.

What fun! As your boy was growing up, did he get to know what ranching was? Did he go out to the ranch?

Well, he'd go out there sometime, but he never did take to it too much.

How long did you work with the Forest Service?

I worked there, summers, just a few years. And then I went to work for the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Administration).

What was your actual work in that?

It was office and field work. In 1935 they passed a law to kill every other little pig, trying to keep the economy so there wouldn't be too much production. And then later we had wheat allotments, and feed grain allotments. And over the years it went to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

Describe what you did to enforce these regulations.

I did all the work in the county.

Describe a work day.

Well, you had to keep up with all the regulations.

How did you do that?

You'd have to read them. Then we was making maps of all the ranches, and plotting the descriptions in a regular book so we could tell where the land was at.

Who went around seeing that the regulations were enforced?

I did.

You did that too?! You did everything!

I did the field work and the office.

So you were it.

And later I become the office manager, which I still did all the work. And then later I took on Eureka County.

So you had a lot of responsibility.

I had to make maps of all that.

How did you learn to do all that?

Just from the regulations, do what the regulations said.

Uh-huh, but I mean to make maps. Did someone give you training?

Yeah, people would come in. And I was also trained in range management too.

Did they send you to training classes?

Oh, yeah, after I got working for the government, every year we'd have two or three seminars.

Where would they be?

Generally in Reno.

Where was your office?

Well, they had it in two plac right across from where the courthouse is now is where I started. Then we moved down into a space in the Austin Hotel—it was still up. And then later we went in with the Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service, and built a building up there by Mrs. Smith's.

Where is that?

Right above the post office. I was in there and helped do a lot of the work getting the building built.

How many hours was your work week?

Starting in, we worked Mondays to Saturday noon. And then later, why, it was five days.

Was this a county job or state job?

No, it was federal. It was the county, but we was paid with federal money.

Alright, but were you like civil service?

Yeah. Well, we wasn't civil service, but we got the same status as civil servants.

Did they have health insurance then? Were you covered for your health insurance?

Yeah, right off the bat, yeah, we had it.

That's important here.

Oh yes!

Did you have vacations?

Vacation, you'd earn so much a month.

And sick leave?

Sick leave.

So that was really your first secure job?

Well, yeah. Well, when I first went to work, we was on Social Security—we paid in Social Security. And then later, we went into the federal insurance and everything.

Federal retirement?

Federal retirement.

How long did you stay in that job?

Thirty-two years.

Oh, good! So that was a really secure base. When you got into that and knew it was secure, did that give a good feeling to your family?

Oh sure!

How did your life change? Did it change in any way as far as your living arrangements? Did you get a car? What did you do as you started to progress in a steady, secure job?

Oh, yeah, we got a better car, we started buying new cars. We always just run them until we had about 80,000 miles. When I'd drive to do the field work, why, I got mileage.

Would you ever have to stay away overnight?

Oh yes.

Like when? Tell me.

When I got Eureka County, we had an office there too, and I had a woman in the office. I would go over there about once a week and stay two days.

Would you have to do inspections in the area?

Yes. Well, they had all the desert land entries was coming in at that time.

Was Austin changing during this period?

Well, it was getting a little more prosperous.

Did the Forest Service come here? Were they here in Austin?

They were already here. They come way back in the teens [1910s] I think.

Was it starting to expand?

No.

What was making Austin a little more prosperous?

Well, there was more jobs opening up, and they had better roads and cars that you could move around.

Cars coming through town?

Coming through.

Did it create the start of other businesses in town?

Yeah, it opened the service station business, the motel business, and all that come in then.

Did people start moving in, younger people?

No, most of them was leaving. You know, unless you had a job, you didn't come here.

We talked a little bit about health insurance. Tell me a little about the medical care here, because there is no hospital. Was there ever a hospital here?

There was, but you might just as well stay at home as go in to what they called the hospital.

Did they ever have a full-time doctor here?

Yeah.

And when was that?

Well, when we first got married here for maybe eight or ten years, they had a doctor.

A private doctor, out of his home?

Yeah.

Do you know his name?

Well, the first one I can remember was named Dr. Ballenger.

Was he a young person starting out?

No, he was a middle-aged guy when he come here.

How long did he stay?

Oh, he was here ten to fifteen years, I guess.

Oh, a long time.

He was here way before I left the ranch.

Oh. And then what happened?

And then, when he left, why, there was another doctor come.

Do you remember his name?

Right off hand [chuckles], I can't think of it.

That's alright. Did he stay very long?

Well, he stayed here, I guess, until he got so old he couldn't work anymore. He was a good old doctor.

About what year was it when you had no doctor? When was that?

Well, then we got an osteopath. There was a couple of them. They was around here way up until, I guess in the late fifties. And then we didn't have no more doctors.

Because no doctor wanted to come, or what?

No, wasn't enough business. You know, things were picking up all over the country, and the doctors were staying where the money was better.

Yes. So what did people do who had accidents, who didn't have time to just go leisurely to a doctor or hospital?

Well in the early days, you put them in an automobile and tried to get them to Fallon to the hospital.

Is Fallon the main place?

Well, at that time. Then later years, after I was married quite a few years, why, they got a county ambulance here that would take people. And that's expanded up to now they have two ambulances.

Does Medicare pay for ambulances when you have to go from here, that distance?

Yeah, they do, if...The ones they got now, I went in the ambulance and they didn't put enough information in the thing, and Medicare turned it down.

Oh, it has to be proven it's an emergency? Is that it?

Why sure! And they didn't do it.

Were you able to get a record from the doctor or someone?

Well, I haven't. It's on appeal.

Okay, so that'll take a long time. Now I want to go back: Where was your son born? At the hospital?

He was born in Ukiah, California. Lilian's mother and father lived in Ukiah, so we were so far away from a doctor here, and she knew the doctor over there, so she went over to the doctor over there and he was born over there.

Stayed a few weeks before the baby's birth?

Yeah.

What about your daughter? That's quite a while later.

She was born in Reno.

Because there was enough time?

Yeah, we got to have a doctor in Reno there, and he took care of her.

When your children were young—I know your dad lived a long, long time—did your parents interact as grandparents with your children?

Yes.

Tell me about that.

Well, we used to leave them—a lot of times we'd go to Reno to the doctor or something—we'd leave the kids with my dad and mother.

Did the kids stay overnight there when you went?

Sometimes.

Did you have family celebrations together?

Once in a while, yeah, around Christmastime.

Okay, describe where that would be held and what it would be like.

Well, most of the time it was at the ranch.

Describe what Christmas would be like.

Well, we'd all get together and we always, instead of having a turkey, we had a goose because we raised geese. Turkeys, we found out, get that disease there at that time, and there was nothing you could do about it. So we didn't have turkey, we'd have goose.

What else would be cooked for dinner?

We'd have everything.

Who did all the cooking?

My mother and sisters.

Did you have a Christmas tree?

Yes, oh yes.

What would be hanging on that tree? What kind of decorations?

Well, we'd have the clamp-on candles, and just like a regular tree you have today, only you had the clamp-on [candles].

Well, some trees have cranberries or popcorn. Did you make your own decorations?

No, we generally...

All bought?

Uh-huh.

Did you celebrate birthdays?

Oh, yeah, every time somebody had a birthday, we always had a birthday cake or something like that.

Were your parents kind of playful grandparents? Did they play with the kids?

Not much, no.

I'm going to ask Lilian more about the kids' schooling. I'm not going to ask you all that. Now I want to move along back to your job. What else can you tell me? Did you stay with that job until you retired, did you say?

Yeah.

How old were you when you retired from that job?

I think I was about sixty-two.

What were some of the other activities you got into in your adult life, beside your job?

Well, on the side, I was on the school board locally, and I was on, at that time, the Lander County Board of Education school board that I was on. And then locally they had just the grammar schools [board], and I was on both boards.

Let's go to the local school board. What years were you on that school board, can you remember?

That was way back in probably the sixties.

How many years were you on the local school board?

I guess I spent about six or eight years.

What were some of the things that were decided, resolved, or some of the things that happened while you were on the board, and where you had some influence?

There was not much doing at that time. We didn't have any money to build anything or [do] anything, and mostly we just set regular, daily, monthly, yearly things that were done.

What would that be like?

Well, just, you know, hiring the teachers or principals, and protests by the parents. Sometimes the school boards would be called in to sit down and see what was the trouble.

Were there certain aspects where you had some influence?

Oh yes, sure.

Tell us about it.

Well, I don't remember, actually, any experience at all. You know, it was so long ago, and doing other things.

You said you were also on the county school board, did you say?

Yeah, at that time. And then later they changed it and just had the county school board now for both schools. All the high

schools, grammar schools, and everything. Before it was split up in Lander County School Board and then the school districts, trustees.

Were you involved when that bigger school here was built? Or was that already built?

No, I wasn't involved in that at all.

What other activities in town were you involved with that you had some influence in this community?

I was on the Austin Town Water Board.

And tell me about that.

We took care of everything to do with the water and sewer for the people. And I was on there when we got the grant to put in the. Everybody had septic tanks, and we got a grant to build the sewer line and ponds and everything out of town, instead of dumping it down here into the ditch, in the canyon.

Do you know what year that was, approximately?

It was about 1973.

How long were you on that board?

I spent about six or eight years on that board too.

How did you have time for so many things and your family?

Well, a lot of times I wasn't home at night, going to meetings.

What else were you involved with?

In the early days I was a fireman, and helped build the firehouse that they have today.

Was that a volunteer job?

Yeah.

Tell me about that. What years were those?

That was way back in 1964, I think, when we finished the building. And the commissioners asked me if I'd kind of be the inspector, and we got two guys to build it. And I was kind of the guy that watched everything to be built.

And that was all voluntary?

Yeah, voluntary.

You were quite a citizen here in town, and contributed an awful lot!

[chuckles] Yeah.

I understand you were a county commissioner.

That was in later years, yeah.

Before that, what else were some of your activities?

Well, let's see, that was most of them: the water board, school boards, and fireman. Then I was in the Lions Club.

Tell me about that.

Well, I was in there for, I don't know, about ten or fifteen years, I guess. During that time I went all the way up through. I was secretary and also the president and went through the whole thing.

Wow! How many years were you president?

About probably three.

About three years?

At different times. I was vice-president and served for a lot of guys that didn't come to meetings.

About how many belonged to the Lions Club?

We always had about ten or twelve people.

What activities did the Lions Club have?

Well, we tried to do things for the community.

Like what?

We'd help the kids out, puffing on foot races at the Fourth of July, and doing other things over the years, like Flag Day and stuff like that, for the kids.

So your work was to benefit the kids here in Austin?

Well, the community too.

Can you give some examples?

Well, I just gave you some: puffing on the deals for the kids and doing different things for them.

And what were the responsibilities as president?

Well, you had to take care of everything that the Lions Club was going to do, and you had to be the leader and lead off.

And get the workers?

And get everybody lined up. We'd have a yearly picnic, and you'd have to get that thing [going]: a barbecue or steak fry. You'd have to get all the supplies and have people try to do it. But you know, if you're the leader, everybody lays back, and you have to do the work.

Are you still in the Lions?

No, I finally quit.

Okay, because I saw they had a breakfast here during Gridley Days.

Yeah.

So how often would they meet?

Once a month.

And where would that be?

Generally in one of the restaurants. We'd have a dinner.

When did you quit the Lions?

I don't know, it's been about eight or ten years ago.

And what other kind of things were you active in?

And then I was in the Chamber of Commerce.

And when did you get active in that?

Well, it's been back about ten years ago, I guess.

And what kind of work did you do for the Chamber of Commerce?

Well, everything: try to promote tourism and doing everything until we got so many people in there that didn't know what they were doing, and wouldn't listen to you. So I just said...And there was other people who were doing a pretty good job, and they backed out at the same time, and let the people go that's in there now.

How many years were you active in the Chamber of Commerce?

I don't know—six, seven years.

Do they have offices in the Chamber of Commerce?

Yeah, they have the president, secretary...

What were you?

I was secretary for quite a few years.

What were some of the things when you were in the Chamber of Commerce... When you say "promote it," in what ways? What happened during that period?

Well, tourism, we tried to get things going to make it better for tourists to come here.

But be specific: tell me what kinds of things, what action to create more tourists coming in, some specifics.

Well, get something for them to see when they come here. We'd take them around to the old mine dumps and Stokes' Castle and stuff like that.

So you had tourists through the Chamber of Commerce?

Yes.

Did you put out some promotional brochures?

We had a regular brochure that was fixed up, and brought up to date every year.

What were some of the things during your time that were more successful?

Well, at that time, there was not much that you could be successful with, here, you know, because you'd just kind of try to get the people to stop here, the tourists, to do things.

Did you promote things like the Gridley Days and the roping? Was that Chamber of Commerce?

Well, that was coming in when I quit.

I see. But before you quit, what were some of the things—did you have anything to do with the signs put in at the Trading Post that say "Tourist Information"?

Yeah, and we had the brochure. People that were looking for information would send letters and stuff, to the Chamber of Commerce, and we'd send brochures.

Oh, okay, through the mail?

Through the mail.

Was that part of your job? Who would handle that?

If I was secretary.

Would you have to respond?

At that time I would have to send the brochures, what information we had on the town. A lot of school kids would send to get what was going on in the town, or in the county, and this and that or the other, and we'd have to send them brochures and tell them what was happening.

When someone comes into town, where do they go for that information?

Well, they had an office up here, but I don't know whether their office is open or not—the Chamber of Commerce—during the summer.

And where was that?

In the old courthouse.

And are there signs directing them there, on the street, so you'd know where to go?

Yeah, we had a sign, I think, on the door or something. But what they do now, I don't know where they've got an office, even.

Or a sign on the highway so people driving through know where to go?

Yeah.

Uh-huh, things like that. I noticed in town a very impressive park and pool and baseball field—just a charming place for picnics. I understand you had something to do with that?

Yeah, I was county commissioner at the time it was all built.

Tell me about that. When were you on the County Commissioners?

I went on in 1975 to 1982.

So tell me how that wonderful place developed.

Me and the county agent, which I knew from when I worked for the government—we got together and we started making plans for the swimming pool, park, and everything. We had the forest ranger into the thing. But before we could get really going, we got up a pretty good plan, why, both the guys left, and here I was left with the whole thing.

Now, when you say "both the guys left," who do you mean?

The county agent and the ranger.

You mean they left town?

They was transferred out.

Were you the one who came up with the idea? Who came up with this wonderful idea?

It was my idea to have a swimming pool.

Let's go back to when you first began to think of what they could add, before you came up with a plan. When did you start thinking about this?

Well, way back when I was in the Lions Club, we always talked about a swimming pool. And the Lions Club would [discuss], "Well, yes, we'll go ahead and we'll see what we can do." And you appoint a committee, and then nothing was ever done. And this went on for years and years. So when I got into

where I had a little power to do something, and a place where I could go to maybe get money, why, then I brought up the plan, had the plan made then—while I was County Commissioner—with these other guys, and we made up the plan, had some pretty good hand maps made of the thing. And then we got the engineer at odd times to do a little of the work on the thing and straighten it up. Then I started rustling money.

Now, was it just for the swimming pool alone, or did you have the concept also then of the whole park?

We had the whole thing: we had the park, pool, the baseball diamond, and tennis court.

Wow! So it was your idea?

Yeah, right.

How long did it take to get it into actuality?

Well, it took about three, four years. [Dedication of park and swimming pool Sunday, August 29, 1982.]

That's not much. How did it progress?

Well, we started as soon as we had the plan. Then we had to start to try to get money.

How did you get the money?

Well, the county, I'd go to the other commissioners and find out how much money would be available. And then at that time Fleischmann Foundation...

Which Foundation?

Fleischmann—same as the yeast.

Where were their headquarters?

They was headquartered in Reno. The man had passed away, and he left this foundation with the trustees, and they was giving out money for these kind of things.

Who initiated getting that?

I did. I went to them, and then I went to the State Parks, which was funded by the National at that time.

And is that in Reno?

In Carson City. And found out how much money we could get for a pool there, and what the county had. Then I asked Fleischmann. Told them what we had to go here with, and if they could come up with the money. And finally I rounded up.

How much did the county give?

I don't remember. It was around maybe 25 percent.

So they were able to come up with some?

Yeah, they came up with some.

So when did they start developing that? When did they start the actual building of that?

God, I don't remember.

What was started first?

The swimming pool. We got the money for the swimming pool first. That was the Un

money, to get that there. Once we got that, why then we got money from the state. Each year we'd get quite a bit of money from the State Parks office.

How long was the pool there before you were able to get funding for the park?

Well, right away, the next year. We built the pool up there and they had the bare ground around there. The next year, we started putting in top soil and sidewalks and outlined where the lawn would be and everything. Then we got the grass in, we bought turf and put it in the next year, and planted trees, and we was off!

Did you do all the work here? Did the people here do that work?

Well, the grass and stuff was all done locally.

With volunteer help?

Yeah.

They had to build a road up there, right? Or was the road there?

When the pool was built, why, then we built the road around. We had the road built around, and then we built the park inside, between the pool and the road. And the road is on the outside now.

When was the lower part, with the ball field and the stands...

That followed a year or two later.

So it was pretty quick that you got it.

Yeah, we fenced it and hauled in some sand and stuff down there to keep the dust down.

It's really a wonderful contribution, because kids and families didn't have many other places [for recreation].

Yeah.

Did it quickly become the popular spot in town?

Oh yeah! The park and the pool both. And the tourists passing through, they really liked to stop there. And still, tourists stop there. The place where we got the money was State Parks, and they handle historical sites.

Did the county give funds so that they could hire someone? Who paid for the staff you needed at the pool?

The county.

How many did they have to hire?

Well, they generally had the manager and a couple of lifeguards.

That was seasonal?

Yeah, seasonal. And then they had a regular guy that took care of the grass. During the time I was county commissioner, I volunteered up there to take care of the utility room, which heated the water and all that for the pool and the showers and stuff like that.

Did you get any recognition for doing so much for this town?

Never said goodbye. [chuckles]

No award, no recognition, no thank you?

No award. [chuckles]

That's, I think, a fabulous contribution. How many kids use that pool in the summer? And adults? I'm sure adults and everyone. Does it get pretty busy?

Oh yeah! Kids are in there continually in the hot weather.

How much do they charge to use the pool? They have to charge something.

Yeah, I don't know. We started out at about fifty cents, I think. Then it went up to seventy-five. I think right today it's about a dollar-and-a-quarter.

And do they supply towels? Do kids bring their own towels?

No, they have to bring their own towels. They have these showers in there. It's a real good installation.

Oh yeah! I mean, when I saw that whole area, I was just struck with that contribution to Austin. And I noticed lots of picnics and breakfasts are held up there.

Oh yeah.

Wonderful. Anything more about that park and pool? What did they name it? Did they put any sign up there to name it? Did they name it after you?

No. There was so much—one or two guys—big opposition about the guy was going to go up there with John Potter and blow it up if they named it after me.

Why?!

Because he didn't like me. He was supposed to be one of the big wigs in Austin. Now, they run him out because he couldn't pay his bills.

Oh, my goodness.

What did they name that park? Anything?

It's the Austin Park.

Is there any plaque up there?

There's a plaque inside of the building, showing the donations, the contractor, and the thing was dedicated to me.

Oh, okay, I'll have to go inside. Where is it inside that building?

You go into the entrance, it's right on the wall on your right.

Alright, I'll have to see that. Do they have any swimming lessons there?

Yes, they do.

Do they have any swimming events?

No, just the lessons for the littler kids.

How long is the pool open, what months?

Generally June through August.

When the kids are out of school?

Yeah.

That's wonderful. I also understand that you had something to do with the Town Hall?

Yeah, we got the money the same way for the Town Hall as I got for the swimming pool.

I want to back up, because I believe it was a church.

Yeah, it was a Methodist church.

Do you want to go all the way back and tell me from the start, with the church?

Well, when they turned the church back, the church didn't want it any more, so the society took it.

Was it a declining church population?

Yeah. And for years here, it was just ready to fall in.

Oh, I see, it was deteriorating?

Oh yes!

And they couldn't keep it up?

Nobody would keep it up, because the church didn't want it, and there wasn't nobody here. And then the society took it.

What society?

It was supposed to be the Lander County Historical Society, here in this end of the county, three or four people. And they found out that they hadn't notified the IRS that they had the thing—the IRS was getting after them. So the woman who was on there was Molly Knudtsen from Grass Valley. And she was on that State Historical Society. She give it to them. And they didn't accept it, because they said, "Hell, we don

t want that property! We can't do anything with it."

It cost so much.

So she came back and talked to me about it, and I said, "Well, you can turn it over to the town." "I don't want to turn it over to the town! We got to turn it over where the money is, to the county."

Well, was she part of the church?

She was [part of] the Historical Society. She was the only one left around here on that Society. So okay, give it to the county.

Were you on the commission then?

Yeah, I was a commissioner. So we took it. And then we started rustling money.

Then you had a headache!

Yeah, *big* headache! We rustled the money the same way.

How?

Through the State Parks, with the historical thing. The historical thing came in then, through the State Parks. The Fleischmann [Foundation] came in. They were going out of business at that time, and the county would put up so much money, and the State Park put up, and we got, I think—it cost \$155,000 to do the job, and Fleischmann Foundation put up \$92,000.

Now, what year was it restored, after you got the money?

It was in the late seventies [1970s].

And what was the plan for the use of the Town Hall? Do they rent it?

To use it for any kind of meetings and all that stuff. Well, now I think they've got rental on it. But all we had them do before, when we first got it, is take care of it and clean it up after their doings. He took the whole roof off—I got pictures of that. He took the whole roof off of the thing and put all new trusses and reinforced the walls so it'd be earthquake-proof. When we put the roof back on, the National Historical Society said, "It looks like a Butler building," and this and that and the other.

Butler?

Yeah, because we put a tin roof back on it so it'd be there for maybe a hundred years. With shingles on it, that's what was ruining the whole building. So we finally got around that, and they put up the money that they originally told us we could have.

Well, it's really a landmark in this town. When you come in, that's what you see first. That really makes it Austin, doesn't it?

Yeah, it's a nice building.

It's a really nice building. What are some of the things it's used for?

Everything. Even when they was in the small school up here, they had the graduation in there sometimes, for the kids. So it's used for everything. The Indians use it for their meetings. Anybody that wants to have a place to meet.

How do they keep it up?

It's done with the person that takes care of the courthouse.

I mean, are there funds through the county to keep it up?

Yeah, the courthouse janitor takes care of this. The park, why, they look after it.

The same [set up]. But what about, is there enough funds set aside from the county for repairs or things that might be needed?

Well, they have to get it out of the Building Reserve Fund, I think.

Okay, so there is a fund?

There is a fund that they can go get the money.

Was there any recognition to you for all of your [efforts]?

They've got a placque in there with my name on it.

And where's that?

Inside of the building, right as you go in the door, on your left, on the wall.

Do you have any certificates or letters or things that have been given to you, or written to you, or for you, on all of these things you did, that we can add to the interview? The park and the church are really so unique in a town of this size, I think, as a stranger coming in, that's the first thing I see from one end or the other. Was there some publicity on it?

Oh yeah! If we didn't put the publicity out, why, nobody else did!

Nobody would do it?!

No!

Do you have any of that I could copy later?

I've got some newspaper articles.

We'll look later so I can add some of that. I understand you had something to do with blacktopping the roads in town?

The first roads.

Was that your job when you were working there, or...

No, that's when I was commissioner.

Tell me about that.

Well, quite a few years before [I was] county commissioner, people wanted to start blacktopping the main road from up by Gridley Store, down by the school, and past there and come out to the main highway again at the International Hotel. And they mixed up the oil—this other commissioner did—to do that job, and there was so much opposition to it, that the commissioner just threw up his hands and laid the oil on the Reese River Road.

Why was there opposition?

It's be so slick, it'd kill somebody, and all this. I knew enough about roads and oil, and I said, "Them 'old mothers' tales' about being killed and all that is a bunch of crap. We're going to build the road." I never heard another sound out of those people.

Oh, so you did get some of those?

Yes.

I know I've never ridden on roads so steep, and if it's gravelly and mud, it's more dangerous than blacktop.

So the first round we put that road in.

Which one went in first?

The one that was originally planned for, by the other commissioner. I put that road through, that first, you know. And now, if they blade the snow off, in two hours, the roads are dry.

Are they going to pave any more of them?

They're pretty well all paved right now. I went ahead the next year or two and paved all the main streets. And after I got out of there, why then they followed-up and got all the extra places that I didn't get when they went through with it.

When it's winter and snowy here, is it hard to get about on the hills?

No, if they plow the snow.

Do they do that?

Yeah, they plow the snow off and if the sun comes out, and we're facing the sun, then all these roads here will be pretty well. Nobody's ever got hurt on ice, and we have some steep roads.

When you were on the county commissioners, were you chairman?

I was chairman twice, or three times, I guess. In the eight years that I was on, I was chairman three years.

What years?

Well, the last year I was on, I was chairman in 1982. About the third year after I started, I was chairman. And then in the middle again, I was chairman. And then the last year I was on, I was chairman.

So you've really been a leader in a lot of the things that have developed in Austin.

Well, at that time.

Well, over quite a few years of the things you've been telling me, I can see what you've accomplished. Now, someone told me that the Gandolfo's—I'm not sure if it was you—there was a grocery store and meat market? Can you tell me about that?

Yes. Me and my wife started that.

When?

It was in 1944 and 1945, I think.

Tell me about it.

We was going to buy out the grocery store that the guy wanted to sell.

Which one was that?

Well, it's the old store, or place there now where a couple of guys live in there, right in the middle by the Golden Club, and it's all closed up now. So we thought we had the deal made. We went to lunch, come back, and the guy had sold it to another guy! So we got kind of teed-off about that, and this building was vacant there, in the Austin Hotel, so we rented that and opened up a store.

You mean part of the Austin Hotel?

Yeah! Where the old dry goods store was.

Was that adjoining the hotel?

It was right near the same old building.

Are there any pictures of that, do you know?

There's some, I think, yeah. The front of it, anyway.

Were you working at another job then?

Yeah, I was still with the government then, but my wife was running the store, and weekends I would work in the store.

So tell me what you stocked.

We had a regular grocery store, everything. We even had a meat market in the back.

Where did you buy the supplies?

We knew the guy that had a store in Eureka, and he hauled all his supplies out of Reno. We'd give him the order when he'd go down every week, and we'd get our supplies—fresh meat and vegetables every week.

You would buy the meat? You wouldn't cut it up yourself?

No, we leased it out to a young guy.

What, the meat market part?

The meat market part, yeah.

You mean, in your store?

Yeah.

And what was the store called?

Just the grocery store. We didn't put a name on it.

Did it have a separate entrance from the hotel door?

Oh yeah.

No sign on it?

I don't think we had a sign on it, I don't remember.

I'll ask Lilian. Do you have any pictures, do you know?

We have a picture of the front. I think we have some around here someplace.

And how long did you have that grocery store?

We only had it one year. The young guy that was running the meat market, he wanted to buy it. So we had about enough of the store. We had price controls on at that time. We was tied up where you couldn't hardly make anything. So we'd made a little money, and when we sold it, we made a little more. So he took it over, and that was the forerunner... Then he was leasing the building there, and there was a vacant lot across the street, where the store is now, and he built that store over there.

Now which store is that?

The Kent Store.

So before Kent's Store, he had it?

Yeah, he had that store.

And what it was called before Kent, when it was his?

I don't know whether he called it the Austin, or what name he had on it, to tell you the truth. [chuckles] That's real funny, but I don't!

Of course you made the most dramatic changes in Austin, with that park and the renovation of the church. Are there any other changes here that you can talk about? What about all the churches? There are a couple of new churches in town?

Yeah, I've never been involved in them.

Any other changes that you've seen?

There ain't been many changes since I been in there, that amount to anything. I had the Senior Citizens Center.

Oh, tell me about that!

That's another thing that I did: I figured that we were going to trade with the state, land that we had below town—twelve acres down here for their shops, garage and yards uptown here—and they wanted to build out of town and they wanted that land.

Which land? Where is that land?

Where the state shops set today, right out of town here, on the road to Battle Mountain. We traded them that land and give them \$25,000 for the state shops and their building up here in town. I done that. And then we figured when we moved the county out of there, they use that to store their equipment, because where the

ambulance is now, why, the county had their garage in there. So when the state got ready to build down here, why, we got the property up there and we moved all the county stuff up there, and we had it earmarked for the Senior Citizen Center to be built in that lot. And that was all in the mill when I went out. Then when I went out, the guys that followed me followed in my footsteps.

So you were the one that thought about that Senior Center?

I set the whole thing up.

Uh-huh, because I can see from all the people I interview, how they all have to hurry down at noon. It seems to be the place for everyone.

For the seniors, yeah.

Not just for the food, but the sociability [as well].

Yeah.

It's a wonderful contribution. Do you go down there for lunch?

We used to once in a while, but it's been a long time. Since I've been under the weather, you know, you don't get out too much. That's been going on for a couple of years, and we haven't been there.

But it seems I was there once, and it was very, very nice.

Yeah, we used to go there. It's real nice.

There's a couple of things that I want to ask about. I know because I work in all of Lander County, that there was a long, long, many years

of Battle Mountain wanting to have the county seat moved there from Austin. Can you tell me, from your personal experience over that long period, about that battle to change it, and what was going on here?

Well, all over the years, I was thinking, "Gee, boy, that'll be a sad day when they move that thing." And it ended up, I was County Commissioner when it happened! That's the truth. But I always said, and told the other commissioners, "If they do it legally, what can you do? We have the laws, we have to obey the laws."

Uh-huh, through votes.

And a lot of people told me, "Fight it! Do this, do that!" I said, "If things are done legally, I'm not fighting anything." And it come to a vote, we went into the courts, it was contested, and we went to the Nevada Supreme Court, and they, to make the law legal, tried to go back and figure in 1964 what the Legislature was thinking when they put that law in. And there was one guy that dissented and said exactly what the law said, and that's the way it should be. So the majority won.

How did it affect Austin?

Well, it didn't hurt them too much.

I heard the bank closed.

Well, that's the one thing it did.

How can a town function without a bank?

Well, it's kind of hard, but once you get banking someplace else, why, you can do it.

Do you do it by mail?

Well, we don't.

What do you do?

We go, generally once a month.

Where?

To Fallon, to the bank.

Is Fallon kind of your main headquarters for "city things"?

Yeah. Sure, they moved the accounts from this bank to Battle Mountain. As soon as they got done doing that and everything, why, we went and took everything out of that bank there and moved it to Fallon, because we go to Fallon to buy groceries and stuff like that, so we wouldn't be going to Battle Mountain, so why should we do business in Battle Mountain?

Yeah, because Fallon has more. Now, they moved to Battle Mountain from here because they handled the county funds?

That's right.

Okay, so that's logical. Through the years, for your family shopping of, let's say, furniture, shoes, supplies that you couldn't get here—where would you go to do that shopping?

Well, really, back in probably the sixties, things started changing: had better roads and cars, and the dry goods store closed up, the grocery stores wasn't too good. So we started going to Fallon to do our shopping, and some in Reno.

How often would you go on these shopping ventures?

Oh, maybe a couple of times, three times a year, something like that.

Was it kind of fun?

Yeah.

Would you go out and eat in a restaurant or go to a movie or something?

Oh yeah, in the hotel, a hotel room, stay all night.

Oh, that's nice. And I know that your daughter lives in Carson City?

Yes.

So did that create visits to Reno and Carson City?

Well, that was later years. When she was a small girl, we'd go to Reno and stay maybe a couple of days and shop around Christmastime.

That's fun.

In the summers, we'd take two weeks' vacation. We traveled all over the western United States.

Oh, did you? With the kids, when they were smaller?

With the girl, Roberta.

That's right, because she's younger.

Yeah, Ted, he was older and during the time he was younger, we didn't do that—we didn't have the money.

You didn't have the car.

Or the car or anything. So Ted missed out on it.

Now let's take Ted through his life after high school: What did Ted do?

He become a deputy sheriff.

Where?

Undersheriff here at Austin. At twenty-two or twenty-three, he was in charge of the Sheriff's Office here. And then he went with the Highway Patrol.

Where?

He was in Wells, Elko, and Battle Mountain.

Where is he living now?

He's living in Battle Mountain.

Is he married?

Yeah.

Have a family?

Five ki four girls and a boy.

Five! So do you go up there to see them?

Yeah. He was fourteen years with the Highway Patrol, and then he was a judge.

A judge?!

A Justice Court judge, for sixteen years.

Did he study to be an attorney?

No, but in Elko, when he was up there on the Highway Patrol, he'd take all the court things over to the Justice Court. So he got to know the operations of Justice Court and then he was in Battle Mountain, so he figured that was a better job than the Highway Patrol—more safe. So he ran for judge there, and he kept the office until he retired.

Good, he's retired now?

Yeah, he's got a car wash and everything.

I'll look at that when I'm in Battle Mountain. And what about your daughter?

She's married to a guy who was a Highway Patrolman. She met him while he was here, a young guy just out of the Army, on the Highway Patrol. She met him and married him, and they moved to Gardnerville. They was up to the lake.

What lake?

Lake Tahoe. And he was the sergeant up there in charge of everything. And then later he was with the school where they taught the Highway Patrolmen. And then he resigned there and took a job with the State Emergency Medical Service. And now he's retiring out of there. He had enough state time that he's retiring.

How long have they lived in Carson City?

They've been there about ten, twelve years.

Uh-huh, so it gives you a chance to get to Carson City.

Oh yeah, we see them there.

Yesterday I had my first experience seeing roping, because I'm a city gal. I was down at the rodeo grounds—they were having roping and things. What can you tell me about the rodeo grounds?

Well, what did you want to know?

Well, back in history, a little bit about how that developed and what it was before.

Well, slowly over the years, way back in the thirties, my brother used to hold a regular rodeo there every year.

Which brother?

Marvin.

You mean, he started the rodeos here?

Yeah.

What did it look like down there then?

Well, the corrals were in the same area. Maybe the corrals are fixed up.

So he built corrals?

Well, he had chutes and everything: he had about four chutes, bucking chutes.

Did he build them?

Yeah.

So tell me about the rodeos: when and what they had.

Every Fourth of July he used to put the rodeo on. He had a bucking string of horses that he used to put rodeos on all over the state.

Oh really?! Tell me again about the bucking string of horses. He owned those?

Yes.

Was that something he was always interested in?

Well, that's what he wanted to do, and he did it for quite a few years.

Where were some of the places he would take these?

Well, he had Tonopah, Wells, Battle Mountain, Yerington, and Carson City, he put rodeos on.

Wow! Now, he did this himself?

Yeah, him and his wife.

Besides the Fourth of July, did they have roping then? Or what else was going on? Or was it just a once a year rodeo?

Just a rodeo is all they had.

Just once a year?

Yeah, a two-day rodeo here.

Did they have picnic grounds down there or anything else?

No, the sewer run right through—the old sewer used to dump out and run right down that ditch right by the rodeo grounds.

It looked, yesterday, like there was quite a lot going on there: the stands there, and a weekly group of ropers meeting, or a club?

I guess, yeah.

Did it grow over the years? the attendance and interest?

No, I don't think so. What you seen yesterday is probably what they generally have.

That was because of Gridley Days that it was such a big event?

Yeah. Well, I think they hold a roping on the Fourth of July too.

Oh, I see.

One day, or maybe two days, I don't know.

Is that a popular place down there? Do people congregate for different things?

Well, the thing is, the ropers come in here, they pull their trailers, and they've got house cars, and they bring their food, they don't buy gas.

Oh, are these people from out of the area?

Out of town.

Oh, not locals?

Not locals. And they come in, they're always talking about the Roping Club being this and that and the other, and they're

getting about four or five thousand dollars a year from the Fair and Rec. Board, from the county, and what good is it doing the town?! The businesspeople up here, what do they get? The motels don't hardly get anybody, and the saloons, they don't come up here. Most all the ropers, when they rope, they've got their house cars there, they cook their own food and visit amongst themselves down at the rodeo grounds, and that's the way the thing goes. And that's one of the things that I have against the Roping Club: it's not doing any good for the town.

Don't they have to pay for the use?

I don't think so.

Are the local people in general not in favor of that?

Well, I don't know. People don't go down there too much. It's mostly outsiders that's interested in that stuff, because, you know, roping is, to me, after going to a lot of good rodeos, it's too bland.

They don't have real rodeos?

No, just roping—just roping steers.

Whereas your brother had real rodeos?

Yeah.

No more?

No, he worked for the Highway Department here and had a motel and he still owns the motel and runs it here, but he lives in Fallon.

Yes, I'm going to try to interview him in Fallon.

So there's no more rodeos?

No.

But it's called rodeo grounds?

Yeah.

Well, anything else more on that?

Well, there's a lot on it, going on. My older brother had a place there where he kept sheep and horses and everything. And over the years, why, he had a mining claim on it.

What's your brother's name? Which one is that?

Don, he's dead. But then he turned it over to Marvin when he left. His son gave it to Marvin, what right and title he had. Then Jimmy Williams...

Who's Jimmy Williams?

He's the brother to the county commissioner.

Oh, Ray Williams' brother?

Yeah. And so they've been down there, the Roping Club and the county commissioner is trying to put him off of there.

Why?

Because they said he has no right there.

Is it country property? Or whose property?

It's supposed to be county property. When I was in there, that's another thing I advertised, and everything, to get the cemetery and we got it under what they call The Color of Title Act, which would be

thinking that you owned it for a number of years, and that's the way we got 115 acres down there.

For what?

For the county. We applied for it under that act, and got it, and got the cemetery.

Now, what's the name of that act again?

The Color of Title Act. We wasn't thinking about the rodeo grounds hardly at all, but Standard Oil was on the other side over there, and they wanted that land that they was on—you know, where the tanks are, there, if you look down to the south side there. And so Standard Oil had an agreement on the side that they would do anything to help the thing along. And when we got it, why, we deeded over to the Standard Oil what they asked for, and then the rest went to the county. And nothing was ever thought about what right or title was had there by my brother, you see.

Oh, they never got legal papers?

No, just squatter's rights, but they have a right.

Can they appeal?

Well, the district attorney is just setting back doing nothing. He found out that it's going to go into court and cause a big deal, and he's not going to be the one to "kick the sleeping dog." [chuckles] So that's where it's setting right today.

Oh, my goodness! Well, does he have that right, as district attorney, to sit on it?

Sure he can!

Oh, he can just delay and delay?

Delay and delay. He's supposed to bring a trespass against Jimmy Williams and Marvin. And he did bring some kind of action, and it went into Justice Court, and they found out that in this case here, it couldn't go into Justice Court, it had to go into District Court. So to retract the action that he formerly took, why, he's got to retract it and pay the lawyer for his time that Jimmy and them had, for answering their first action. And he didn't want to do that, I guess, the district attorney. And he's never withdrawn the thing. But then the commissioner says, "Trespassing! Okay, we're trespassing."

Who's trespassing?

Well, the county is going to trespass then for Jimmy for being on there.

Well what's Jimmy doing on there? I'm confused.

Well, he's just on the property for my brother.

You mean, he lives there? No, no, but he's got sheep and horses and pigs there.

Oh, on that property. You mean, not on the rodeo grounds?

No, right off the side there.

Oh, off to the side—but they always did. They always had that.

Yeah, they always had it for twenty-five years.

Is that in someone's way? What is the problem?

Yeah, they want them out of there, because it's shabby-looking, got some old sheds over there. That's the way that thing stands now.

When did you build this beautiful home and move here?

It was seven years ago. We started with the September before, and we moved here in March.

Did you live in your folks' home all the time until this house?

Yeah, well, they give it to us—they give us that house. When we got married, they give it to us, they deeded over the house to us, and we still own the house. We rent the house out.

Okay, but you lived there all those years in that house?

Yes.

Tell me about when you began to think of building a house here on this beautiful lot.

It was pretty near twenty years ago, before we started building.

You bought the lot?

Well, we got three acres here. We got, I don't know, about twenty-five or thirty lots here.

Someone said it was called China Hill?

China Ridge.

Why?

Well, the Chinamen, when they had a Chinatown here, it was right here.

When was that?

Way back in the early days, when they did quite a bit of mining around here, and I guess worked on the railroad, when they built a narrow gauge railroad in here.

And they lived up here?

Yeah.

In shacks?

Yeah, josh house, they called them. And it burned down. And then I used to have a corral right below here, before I filled it in. I picked up I-don't-know-how-many Chinese coins.

Is that right?! Did you name this China Ridge?

No, it's known by everybody.

When you bought the lot, was there anything on it?

Nothing, just the ridge.

A most beautiful spot. The view from all sides.

We got a D.A. Caterpillar tractor and leveled this all off.

Just an absolutely beautiful area. So it looks like you intend to stay here in Austin, enjoy this beautiful house.

Oh, I think we will. We always say, "How old do you have to be before you leave?"

They say, when you get old, we have to go somewhere. Well, I think that's a funny saying, period. [laughter]

Did you have this designed and build it to your own specifications?

Well, we sent and got the plans. We saw it in a magazine, and we ordered these plans from way back in New York. I guess they build a lot of houses like this back in the East. We kind of modified it a little.

Who built it?

A guy by the name of Rich Lee. He's out of Lovelock. When he was a young guy, him and another guy put in our kitchen in the other house. He was just starting out as a carpenter then, this Rich Lee. We was talking about building a house then, and he said, "If you ever build a house, I want to build your house." So as soon as we got ready to build, he was building houses in Lovelock—he's originally out of Fallon—so we contacted him, and man, he come right over and we built the house.

Oh! So now you're really enjoying not only this beautiful house, but you have such a wonderful view.

Yeah, and over there sandwiched right in between two houses—we could touch either house from our house.

Oh, and now you have all the privacy. Just beautiful.

That's why we got such a big yard! [laughter] We've got stuff planted all over the place.

So now, besides this lovely house and scenery, what are things that you like to do in your retirement?

Well, I really like to work in the yard and stuff like that.

Do you still do that? Do you work in the yard? Oh yeah! I did all the landscaping around, the coping for the lawn. We've got to put a lawn in this little block right out here, and one in the back here yet. I got the coping up on that last year.

Oh my, so you're very physically active!

Oh yes!

That's wonderful. What else do you like to do?

Well, I like to get out and do a little prospecting.

Do you still do that?

Oh yeah.

Where?

Well, different areas. I got a lot of geology maps.

Have you always done prospecting?

Yeah.

So you're really physically able to do that?

Yeah.

Do you have some kind of a social life with friends? Do you play cards?

No.

You don't like anything like that?

No. That irritates me [laughs], to play cards.

Anything else that interests you, besides the physical gardening and prospecting? Do you still fish?

No, when they planted these eight-, nine-, ten-inch fish, why, I give up fishing. When we took a school teacher out—she was eighty years old—she wanted to fish, so we fixed her a fish pole and she was catching them fish. I quit fishing! [laughter]

Too big?

No, too easy to catch!

Oh, too easy to catch! No challenge!

Well, I've got a fishing license now. We've got a few spots. Lilian really likes to fish, so we go out in a spot or two and we catch these little brook trout, and man they're good eating!

Where do you go?

I'm not going to tell that story! [laughs]

I also didn't ask you, but I had my first trip up in the Kingston area have you done much in that area in Kingston Creek and Big Creek?

We prospected a lot in there, in them areas—looked it over, and the formation.

Beautiful!

We'd get these maps from the Geological Survey, and it showed all the different formations. So you pick out the country where these formations show, then you go out and prospect. It'll carry gold and silver and minerals. You don't spend your time running around cracking the volcanic flow! [laughs] You waste your time! I see a lot of people doing that.

They don't know! Did you have any luck?

Yeah, well, I was telling you, we got good exploration coming out here, drilling and doing a lot of work.

Good, I hope I hear good luck from you.

Yeah, I hope we do too!

So before I end, is there anything else that we didn't cover?

Oh, there probably is a lot of stuff.

Well, if you think of any before the project ends, I'll be coming back a couple more times—we can always add it. So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for sharing your experiences, observations, and your life with us. Thank you so much.

Thank you!

This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, and I'm at Bert Gandolfo's home for a second session of the interview. Today's date is October 4, 1993. Good morning, Bert! There are a lot of things we didn't cover in our first interview, because from the things that you've been showing me this morning, you have been such a leader and

so active in many things in Lander County. I want to go back to the war years, because I saw a service award that you got, and I want you to tell me about your role in the wartime price and rationing program.

In what way? What did you want?

Well, you need to tell me, because you got an award, and I want to know what your role was and what was happening here. This is in 1942. When did you start? What did you do? What was your role?

Well, as soon as price rationing went into effect, why, I was appointed chairman of the Rationing Board here in Austin. I was appointed by the sheriff. It was funny, he didn't like me, and I had an office right across the street from him. The first thing he did was, [he thought], "I'll get this young guy busy," and he walks over and he said to me, "Here's the news I got. I'm appointing you chairman of the Rationing Board here in Austin. You can go ahead and appoint your own board." Then from there I took it over and was on the board for about probably three years until my sister—it was hard to get a clerk—and she was available for the job, so I resigned so she could help the board, so she could become the clerk of the board.

A couple of questions: Number one, how old were you then? And number two, what was your sister's full name?

I was around, I guess, thirty years old at the time. And my sister's name was Ida Gandolfo.

Now, for those many people researching today, we know the war years, but to many, they

weren't living then. Tell us about the rationing, and some of the rationing problems of things that you couldn't get.

Well, there was price controls on everything, and some of the things were rationed through the Ration Board, like sugar and flour and all that. They'd have gasoline, and you'd have to get a certificate every month for gasoline from the board, and also certificates for a pound of sugar or flour or something like that. And this went on all during the time that the board was in effect.

Were there things here in Austin—which is an isolated area, and hard to get things anyway—were there some things during the war that you just couldn't get?

Well, yeah, a lot of things: sugar and gasoline were all hard to get, so it had to be rationed—otherwise, there wouldn't be...And you had to have a reason for gasoline, why you wanted the gasoline.

What kind of evidence would they have to bring to you to make the decisions?

Well, they'd just tell who they was and what kind of a job they was doing, and why they needed the gasoline. And the sugar, a family could get so much a week or a month, and that's all they could get.

Did you ever have some problems with those that might not have been approved for the gasoline or the tires? Were there ever any conflicts here?

Well, there was one conflict with a church, the Catholic church. The priest that was here wanted to get a fifty-five gallon barrel of gas

and put it in the basement of the church, which I opposed for the reason that it was dangerous, and that he didn't have enough qualification to get the fifty-five gallons. And there was quite a controversy over this.

I can see you had to be a pretty strong person, because when you live in a community and you want to stay cordial with everyone, you have to be pretty strong to refuse. Did you find any of that, or anyone else on your board?

Oh yeah, we had a lot of problems. We tried to work them out to the benefit of the war [effort], and also to the benefit of the people.

I understand also during the war it was hard to get shoes. In my interviews, people would say their shoes would be worn out before they could get another pair. Did that happen here?

Oh yeah, a lot of times, sure. But in a small town, why, you know pretty well what was going on.

Now, during those years, you got an award, and you were in charge. How many years were you active in that program?

Probably about three years.

Is there anything that you can remember, that sticks out in your mind of some of the problems during that period of rationing? Did you have to go to higher sources to get any help?

Oh yeah, we were in contact with the people that were in charge of the state. If something would come up that we couldn't handle, why, we'd take it to the state people and get a decision from them.

And how long did your sister run it?

I think she was still on the board there when price controls were taken off.

Anything else, before we leave that, from your responsibilities? Number one, how much time did you have to spend on that?

We had pretty near a meeting every week, to get the board members to do the job. We had quite a turnover of board members from time-to-time.

Now for the day-to-day action on rationing, where, and how did someone bring their requests, and how did they get the rationing tickets? What were your activities outside the board meetings?

Well, if anybody would contact me, or any of the board, for stamps or certificates that we needed, why, the office was open five-and-a-half days a week at that time. And they could get up there to the board, and they could either get their stamps or make the application, and then the board would meet and take care of them.

Now, where was this office, and did you have clerks who handled it?

Yeah, well, that's what—my sister finally become the clerk to the board. The office was in the courthouse, upstairs.

Anything else about that war price and rationing program, before we move on to some of your other activities?

Well, it's been so long ago, that I can say right now, nothing comes to mind. But we always had, like I say, trouble with the board

members. That was one of the big things, to keep somebody on the board.

Why is that?

Well, they didn't want to be put on the spot to turn somebody down.

Okay, I can understand that. You have to be very strong to be able to refuse.

Especially when I got into it with the Catholic priest.

Oh, okay, I can understand that. I see that you have many certificates of appreciation for your involvement in the Nevada State Health Coordinating Council. Tell us, when you started, what was your role, and what were some of the things that you accomplished during that period? Start with the very earliest date that you got involved with that activity.

Dates! To tell you the truth, I don't remember. It was in, probably the first four years that I was county commissioner.

Tell me how you were assigned this, and details, because I don't know anything about it, and neither will others who will want to know more about it.

Somebody in the county would send a name in to the governor. I guess they would look them over down there. Anyway, they contacted me if I would serve on the board, and I said I would, and that's how I got on the board. I was appointed by Governor O'Callaghan, I think it is.

Mike O'Callaghan, yes. What was the role of that board?

Well, it took care of all the health questions that was controlled by law, out in the counties and all over the state. We had a meeting probably once a month. It'd either be held in Reno or Carson City. Any questions or difficulties that come up with the hospitals or the health department that was controlled by the state and the counties, why, then we'd act on them. We were just an advisory council. It would go to the paid people on the state level, and they'd carry out whatever—either act on what we'd done, yes or no.

The first question I have is, how many served on that State Health Coordinating Council?

There must have been probably about around twenty people, because there was one representative from each county.

I see, so you represented Lander County. You were the only one representing Lander County?

Right.

Tell me some of the health problems that you were able to bring to them from the Austin area, in particular.

Well, we was here without a doctor. We was always trying to get a better ambulance service and better training for the people who would run the ambulance. And these were some of the problems that we'd discuss. And then they'd come from the top down, too: the Lander County Commissioners, the other people in the county that had been doing this.

Did your role representing Lander County on that council help the health situation here? Were they able to resolve some of them through that council?

Yeah, we sure did. There were a lot of things. We'd bring it to the attention of the state people. In a lot of cases, there was laws that pertained to the county, unless you got down and dug them out and seen where you could get help, why, that's the way we'd do it.

Give us some specific areas of issues and the ways they were resolved—especially here in Austin.

Well, we got better ambulances and better-trained people. If they was training for the EMS and stuff like that, we knew where to go on the state level to get people that they'd send here to put on these programs.

Tell us what EMS is.

Emergency Medical Service.

Now what about nurses and doctors and hospitals? Did anything happen in those areas?

All over the state, in the small hospitals out of Vegas and Reno—all the other hospitals was always having trouble, you know, with finances and stuff like that.

And was this council effective in getting help for the hospitals?

Well, it'd go on up to the head people that was handling all this, and it'd try to be worked out on the state level.

Were there any actions that you were pleased with that helped, especially in Lander County? And positive actions on the hospitals?

Well, there wasn't too much at that time. Over the years, different laws have changed, that it did help later.

Going back to your work on that council: First of all, the things that you were real pleased with, and things that maybe you were unhappy about.

Well, a lot of the things you could do in the counties, you'd find out what other counties were doing. In that way, you'd get some information to help some of the problems in the county.

So you kind of learned from each other?

Yeah.

Was there cooperative efforts like, "Well, you could use our hospital"?

Yeah, it was worked out. We didn't have a hospital here, so we wasn't too concerned with those things.

Did you find out, let's say, that you could go to the hospital in Churchill County, or Nye County? Was there cooperation?

Oh yeah, sure.

Now, when did you go off of the council? When did you go off of that Council?

Sometime in 1983.

And why was that?

Well, actually, right now, I can't remember what it was.

Is that when you went off the commission?

Oh maybe, yeah. I resigned that, right, was no longer a commissioner.

Now, since 1983, when you were on that, have there been any developments in the health services for the Austin area?

Oh yeah, we got better-trained people handling ambulances. We got good ambulances, and the hospital in Battle Mountain was still in operation.

Did this council help bring the visiting nurses?

No.

That was another project?

Yes.

Anything else before we leave the health issue?

I don't believe so, that I can remember.

You also showed me this morning two certificates from the State of Nevada, Executive Department: it says "appoint and commission, Bert Gandolfo, a member of the State Land Use Planning Advisory Council, State of Nevada" And the first one I'm looking at is July 1977-June 1979, and a second one, July 1979-June 1982. So that means for five years you were on that Council. Starting from the very beginning, tell us first how you were appointed to that, about your role, and some of the actions taken by that council.

I was appointed to this board just about the same was as I was to the Medical Advisory Council—by having somebody in the county to represent Lander County on this board.

Do you know the selection process? Was it through the board of commissioners, or how were names given to them?

I don't know how they got the names, but they would contact you and see if you would serve. And if you would, why then they'd appoint you.

So tell us, from the first time that you were appointed, what your responsibilities on that Council were.

Well, most of it was on anything about land in the counties and the state, and zoning laws all over the state, on land.

You need to give us some specifics, because people not knowing Nevada wouldn't have any idea. Give us some specific issues that were taken up while you were on the Council.

Well, right off hand, I don't remember any. But anything that would come up that things wasn't being done right, or questions with how the operation of lands and zoning was being done, why, then we'd recommend through higher-ups that something should be done, the laws should be changed.

Were some of the issues on the grazing issues?

No, we never mixed into that. It'd be mostly on control of the land, and mostly zoning. A lot of it was zoning in the counties.

You mean, like in the cities and towns?

Yeah, towns, and out in the country.

Now let's get to Lander County. Can you remember any of the zoning issues in Battle Mountain or Austin?

Well, in Austin, we never did have much problem with the zoning, because they

figured that it wasn't that important. But Battle Mountain, during the time that I was county commissioner, we had a lot of trouble with the zoning laws. It was just coming in, and there was always a problem.

Can you remember any specific problems? Was it with the casinos or the businesses or homes, or what kind of zoning?

It was mostly in the home area where land was zoned for two-and-a-half acres and maybe somebody would want to make it more dense, and some of them would want to make it larger zoning in the tract.

I see. You mean when subdivisions and houses were being built?

That's right. And at that time, why, Battle Mountain was having a lot of that problem.

Was that because it was growing?

Yeah, because the town was growing.

Was that because new mining was coming in?

Yeah. At that time, when it first started, the barite mining was one of the major things.

And so then, does that mean when people came in, they didn't just rent? They looked to buy and live there?

Yeah, a lot of people wanted to buy. And then there was a lot of places where they was building houses and selling the houses. They'd either want to make it more dense or break down some of the five-acre tracts into two-and-a-half-acre tracts.

They wanted to make more money?

Yeah.

Did they win?

Well, if they had a good justification for it, sure.

Can you remember anything on that Advisory Council that was of particular interest, or that stands out in your mind because of things that the council either changed or brought in new ideas? Anything like that you can remember?

Well, some of the things, there's always some new ideas of how to handle these things. And that was what everybody was looking forward to, is to be able to correct a lot of the problems over the state.

And did some of that get accomplished while you were there?

Oh yes! I think the thing is still in operation in the state.

Can you think of any specific new ideas that were accepted?

Not right at this time, it's been so long ago.

Sure. Was a lot of it dealing also with the growth in Las Vegas?

Yeah, we had quite a few people on the deal from Vegas. Most all of our meetings was up here in the northern part of the state. I don't think we ever had a meeting there. But a lot of the commissioners and other interested people out of Vegas would always come up to meetings.

Did they meet in Reno sometimes?

Reno, Elko, Winnemucca, and Carson City.

How often did you meet?

I think it was about every two months.

Did you have assignments before you met, that you had to accomplish for the meeting?

Yeah, we'd have a regular agenda.

So that you were here, the only one representing Lander County?

That's right.

So what were some of the kinds of things that you had to prepare before the meeting? What issues, and how did you go about doing all that?

Well, if we had a problem, why, we'd always, you know, bring it up when we got to the meeting, or get it on the agenda so it could be discussed.

Would people come to you with issues that they would want you to bring up on that council?

In some cases, yes.

And you were still on the commission when you were first appointed.

Right.

So would you bring commission issues? Would that be discussed in your commission meetings for you to bring to them?

Yeah. Well after the action on the state level and board, why, then I would report to the county commissioners what happened with this or that in zoning or whatever.

So you were like the liaison between the commission and the state on the health issues?

Uh-huh. Same thing.

Anything else on that state land use planning council, before we leave that subject?

No, I don't think there is. I don't remember much, it's been so long ago.

But that's a good contribution. I know you went deer hunting this weekend. Almost everyone I talk to goes hunting—it seems to be the hunting season for deer. Tell us a little bit about the laws, what people are allowed to do, what they're not allowed to do, what kind of guns they're allowed to have. Discuss that for us a little bit.

Well, the first thing, you have to get a tag, and that's put on a drawing basis. You make an application to the state. They might have sixty thousand applications and only give out twenty thousand tags, so you're lucky if you get a tag. Once you get your tag, you can go out and get a—whatever it's for, if it's for an antlerless or for a buck. Then you have to report it back in. As soon as you kill your deer, you have to put the tag on the deer somewhere, and keep it on there with the most part of the meat. And you can't move a deer out of the county or transport it unless you've got your tag and doing it yourself. If you send it with somebody else, why then you have to get a permit to do that.

A lot of questions here: How do they pick from the applications? Is it like a lottery?

Yeah, it's done with computers. I don't know how they do it.

How often do they do this, every year?

Every year.

Does the computer show if someone has gotten it too often, so they try to make it fair and let others get it?

Well, if you don't get a tag—in the past they did this—why, you could get on what they called the “preferred list” and they'd try to draw, I guess, your number. In a lot of cases, even people on that list sometimes don't get a tag.

Now, to even get your name on, how long do you have to be a resident? What do you have to send to them to get on the list?

If you're in the state six months and in the county where you make application from, thirty days. And that's all you have to do to qualify.

Is there a starting age?

Yeah, it's around, I think, about sixteen, to get a tag.

So that young. And when you say it could be a buck or something, is it different animals different times of the year?

Well, they have antelope, elk, bighorn sheep and deer.

So are you allowed to catch one of any of those? Or are those different times?

Each one is separate.

Now, when you get a tag, is it just for one of those, or all of those?

No, just for one.

Okay, so you might get a tag for a deer, someone else would get a tag for an antelope?

Well, they have special drawings for antelope, and each individual species has a tag drawing.

I see. And are they different times of the year?

Yeah.

So is it possible that you ever got two different tags?

No. Well, I did get a bighorn tag at one time, and hunted bighorn sheep.

That's interesting. So it's quite limited, and controlled, so you don't lose all the animals. And for the residents of the state.

Uh-huh.

What happens of someone's caught from out of state, hunting, and catch something, or maybe don't know the law. What happens to them?

Well, they're picked up, and their guns are taken away from them and they put a big fine on them.

And what kind of guns are allowed in Nevada?

It's got to be the larger-type guns for deer, and all the other game.

Uh-huh, the hunting guns, is that right?

Uh-huh.

Do they allow hand guns?

No.

So where do you go? Let's start, first you went deer hunting. Where do you go for the deer hunting?

Well, when you get your tag, the state is broken into a number of areas, so when you make your application, you put the areas that you want to hunt in, in first, second and third choice. Then when your tag comes out, it has that area on there, and it's marked on the map and you have to stay within that area to kill your deer.

So where did you go this weekend?

I was in Area 15, north of Austin.

How many miles north did you go?

Well, I was only out probably about eight or nine miles.

Do you have any copies of any of these documents that I could copy to show what kind of a tag or application you need for hunting, or the map that you got back?

I got a map, and I also got the tag.

I would sure appreciate copying it, to add to your interview, because for people who don't live in Nevada or don't live in hunting country, you've supplied information that is very valuable.

Okay.

Do you also go fishing?

No, I quit fishing when they started planting the planters, because anybody that goes out and is able to stagger up to the creek with a worm on [a hook] can catch a fish, and it got too easy fishing, so I haven't fished for years.

What do you mean, "planters"? where they would put the fish in?

Yeah, they raise them in the ponds, and then bring them out and dump them in the creek.

Why?

To stock the creeks. They have such heavy pressure on, reproduction is not big enough, so they have to plant fish. They do it every year. They have hatcheries in three or four different places in the state that they raise these fish, and then they're distributed out all over the creeks within the state.

Is it fishermen who want to fish—and there aren't enough fish—that lobbied for the hatcheries and the planting of the fish?

Oh yeah. Well, this is the history of the fishing in Nevada—they had the hatcheries way back fifty years ago, that they raised fish and planted in different areas.

Do people buy a fishing license?

Oh, yeah, you've got to have a fishing license. Now you have to have a fishing license plus a trout stamp before you can be legal.

Now what is the trout stamp for?

If you catch trout, why then you have to have that stamp on your license that you paid ten dollars for that stamp.

Is there a limit to how many you can catch?

Oh yeah, there's limits pretty well over the whole state on different [species]. In some, the lakes are a little different than they are in the streams.

And is there a license besides the stamp?

Yeah.

What do you pay for a license?

Well, like a senior citizens get a license for two dollars, but then a regular license, I think, is around ten dollars. But then the seniors don't get nothing off on the trout stamp.

How many trout are you allowed to catch?

I don't know, I think this year it's only about five—between five and ten.

Do you think the state makes enough to cover the fisheries through the tax on the stamp and the license fee? Is that what it's for?

Well, at one time, the Fish and Game Commission operated separately in Nevada, and had their own budget and everything from the intake off the license and deer tags, [and so on]. In the last seven or eight years, they've been taken in and put on the state budget, and I imagine some of the state money now is used in the Fish and Game.

Do you have any photographs of you either catching a deer or an antelope or fishing, that we could add to your interview?

I've got a lot of pictures of different places—I don't know where they're at right now—of deer that I've [bagged]. I have pictures of them.

Well, if you can find any later, get in touch with me, to add, because that's very interesting.

Anything more to add on the hunting and the fishing, before we leave that area?

No, I don't think there's much more.

And you're still vigorous enough to go hunting! Who do you go with when you go hunting?

Well, this time I've been hunting by myself.

And you're not concerned?

Oh no.

You're still a pretty vigorous man to do that alone! That's wonderful.

I don't know what I'd do if I got a deer now, and he weighed 165 pounds, if I was out there alone, whether I could put him up in back of the car or not! [laughter]

You'd better take somebody with you next time! Now, tell me, from your long, long experience and your wisdom and your activities in this region, what you foresee, let's say in the next decade, for Austin. Are there new people coming? Is there anything happening that might boost the economy? Tell me a little bit about your thoughts on Austin.

Well, I think no matter what happens, Austin is going to be here with the amount

of people we've got, and there'll be more people coming as the population grows in all the West, like California, and then Reno and Las Vegas. These people want to get out, and we have quite a few people coming in here every once in a while now, picking up property and looking for a place for the summer and stuff like this. I think, actually, the town will probably grow over the years in the future.

That's very good to hear. And do you foresee it also—it's a wonderful scenic area—some leadership in developing some, Some promotion for people to see and get to know the gorgeous areas around here. Maybe an inn or a lodge—because people want to come, but there aren't many places to stay.

Well, I think as the population grows and the travel picks up on the highway, you'll find that there'll be probably new motels built. Since the Great Basin Park has been opened, the traffic probably on this road is pretty near doubled, with people going to and coming from the Great Basin Park.

I know I couldn't get a room Saturday night here in Austin. I had to stay in Fallon and come up Sunday morning for the celebration! Everything was filled! [laughs] So I've learned I have to reserve far ahead.

Yeah, well that's the way it is now, and here four or five years ago, why, this wasn't happening. But it sure is here [now]. And especially in the summer. In the winter, things quiet down.

Sure, I'm happy to hear that. Now, is there anything else that we haven't covered in your very informative and valuable interview?

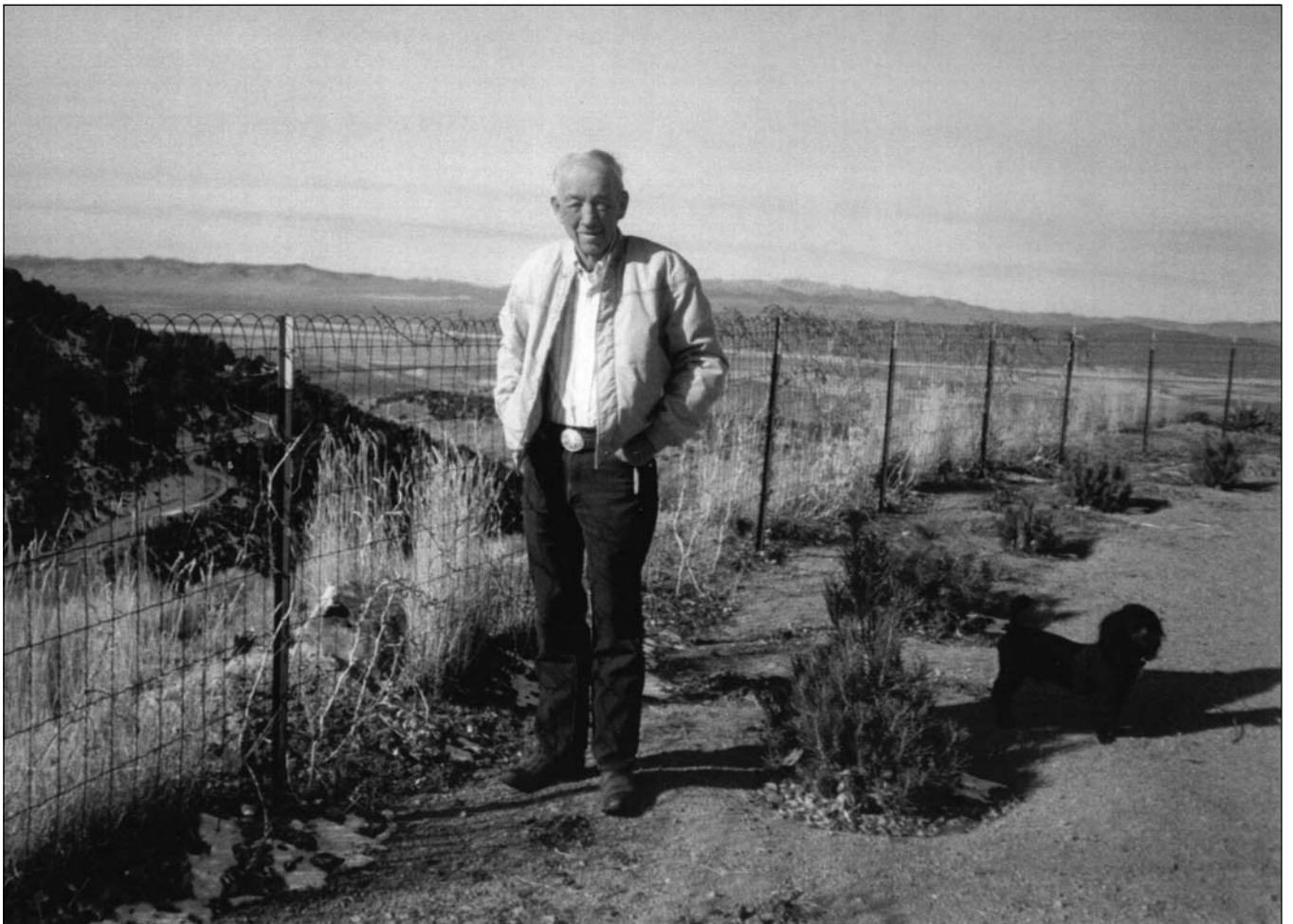
There's so much of it [chuckles], that I probably missed a lot of things!

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project I thank you so much for sharing so much of your life's work and your role in this very unique place of Austin. Thank you.

Thank you.

This is the end of the interview.

BERT GANDOLFO PHOTOGRAPHS



BERT GANDOLFO, JUNE 21, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

Thursday, December 9, 1976 ELKO DAILY FREE PRESS, Elko, Nevada 7



LANDER COUNTY COMMISSIONER Bert Galdolfo and Bicentennial Committee member Estelle Saralegui inspect painting of the county's namesake, Col. Frederick W. Lander. The painting will hang in the courthouse in Austin.

Lander County Dedicates Painting of Namesake

AUSTIN — A painting of the county's namesake, Col. Frederick W. Lander was dedicated at the County Commission meeting last week.

The painting was commissioned by the county's Bicentennial Committee and was painted by Celeste Segerstrom of Imlay.

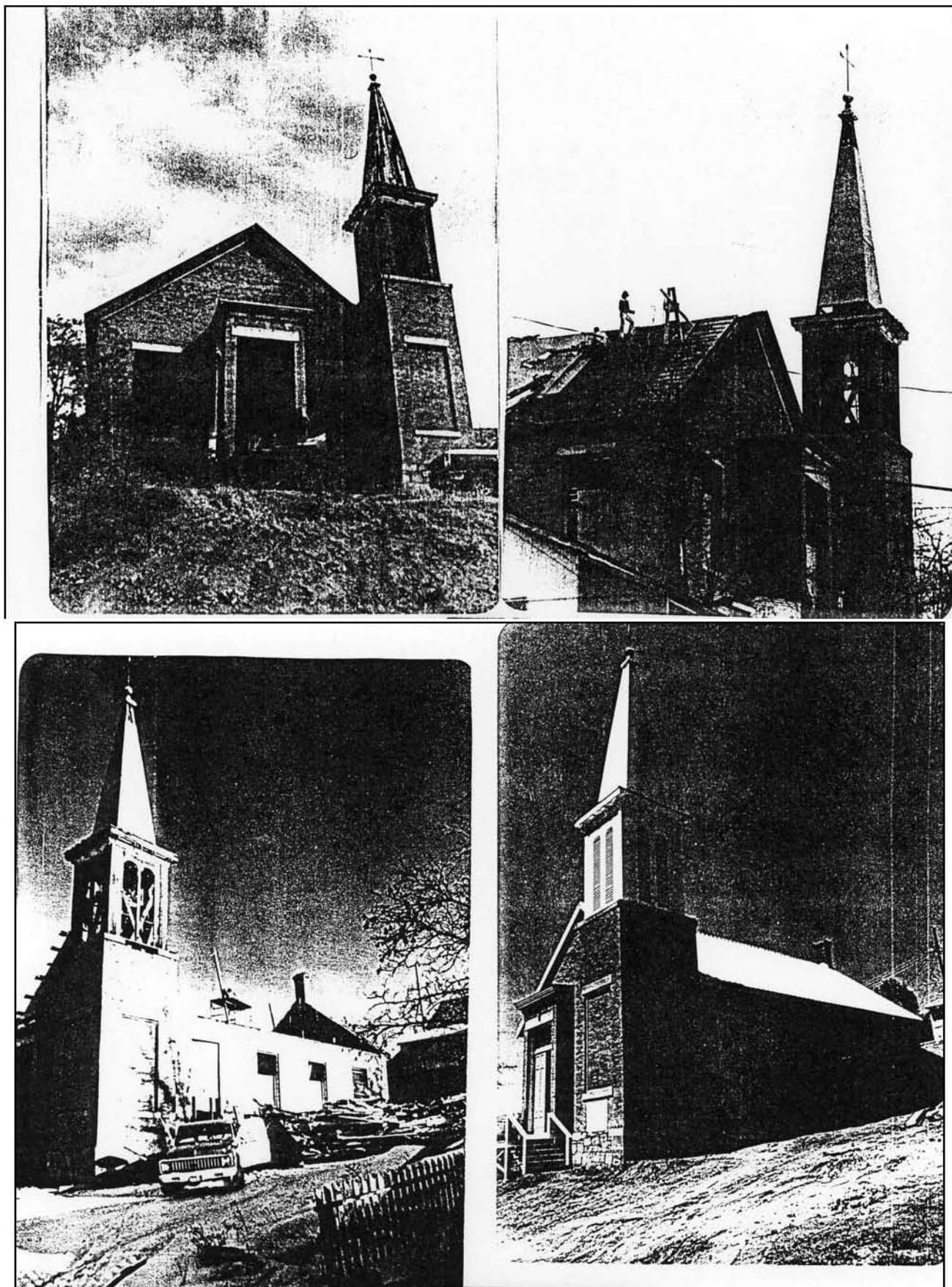
A brief biography of Col. Lander was read by committee member Madge Bertrand in behalf of chairman Archie Albright and fellow members Joy Brandt, Essie Strickland and Estelle Saralegui.

Col. Lander was a trailblazer and surveyor who laid out the route of the Pony Express, which goes through Lander County and Austin.

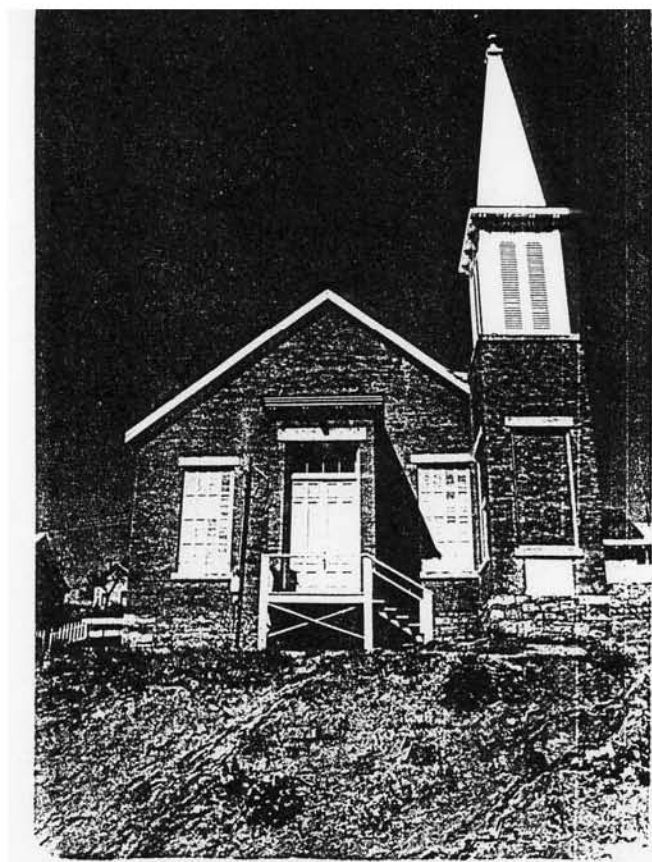
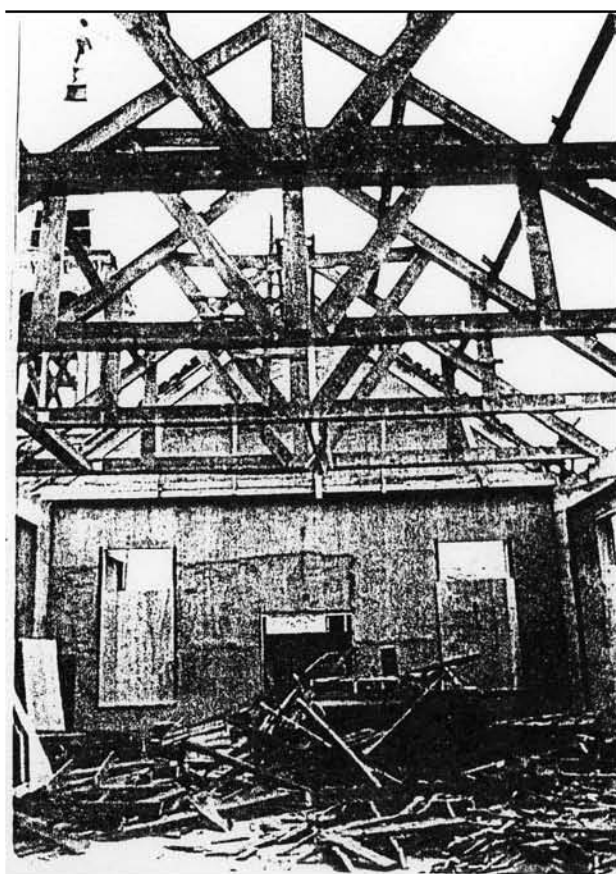
He was also instrumental in making peace with the young Chief Winnemucca after the Indian Wars around Pyramid Lake and Ft. Churchill about 1861.

The painting will hang in the county courthouse. It depicts several scenes from Col. Lander's life through montage.

Article in *Elko Daily Free Press* (December 9, 1976) titled, "Lander County Dedicates Painting of Namesake," with photo of Bert Gandolfo and Estelle Saralegui inspecting painting of Colonel Frederick W. Lander.



Restoration of Austin Town Hall (1970s, formerly Methodist Church)



Restoration of Austin Town Hall (1970s, formerly Methodist Church)



To All to Whom These Presents Shall Come, Greetings:

KNOW YE, That reposing special trust and confidence in the loyalty, integrity and ability of BERT GANDOLFO

I, MIKE O'CALLAGHAN, Governor of the State of Nevada, by the authority in me vested by the Constitution and laws thereof, do hereby

APPOINT AND COMMISSION

HIM, the said BERT GANDOLFO
as A MEMBER OF THE
STATE HEALTH COORDINATING COUNCIL
STATE OF NEVADA

under the laws of the State (NRS - 439A.030); and I authorize him to discharge, according to law, the duties of said office, and to hold and enjoy the same, together with all the powers, privileges and emoluments thereunder appertaining, for the ~~term of~~ UNEXPIRED TERM, BEGINNING MARCH 21, 1978 and expiring on OCTOBER 30, 19 78

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Nevada. Done at Carson City, this 21st day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight



Mike O'Callaghan
Governor of the State of Nevada

By the Governor.

[Signature]
Secretary of State

By _____
Deputy

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

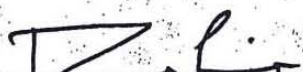
The Nevada State Health Coordinating Council hereby expresses its sincere appreciation and gratitude to:

BERT GANDOLFO

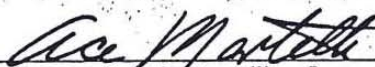
in recognition of HIS dedication and contributions to improving health care in Nevada through the health planning activities of the

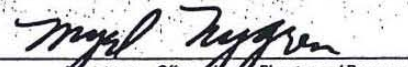
NEVADA STATE HEALTH COORDINATING COUNCIL

this 9 TH day of DECEMBER, 1981


Governor of Nevada


Chairman, Nevada State Health Coordinating Council


Director, Department of Human Resources


Administrator, Office of Health Planning and Resources



To All to Whom These Presents Shall Come, Greetings:

KNOW YE, That reposing special trust and confidence in the loyalty, integrity and ability ofBERT GANDOLFO....., I, ROBERT LIST, Governor of the State of Nevada, by the Authority in me vested by the Constitution and laws thereof, do hereby

APPOINT AND COMMISSION

.....BERT GANDOLFO.....
A MEMBER OF THE.....
LAND USE PLANNING ADVISORY COUNCIL.....
STATE OF NEVADA.....

under the laws of the State (NRS 321.740); and I authorize him to discharge, according to law, the duties of said office, and to hold and enjoy the same, together with all the powers, privileges and emoluments thereunder appertaining, for the term of three years, beginning July 1, 1982 and expiring on June 30, 1985.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Nevada.

Done at Carson City, Nevada, this 22nd
 day of June, A.D. 1982

.....
 Governor of the State of Nevada
 By the Governor:

 Secretary of State

By
 Deputy

BERT GANDOLFO

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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LILIAN GANDOLFO**PREFACE**

Lilian Akers Gandolfo, born in San Diego, California in 1918, visited her sister in Austin, Nevada at seventeen when she graduated high school. Her sister, married to Ray Dory of Austin, ran a grocery store where Lilian met Bert Gandolfo. Within four months they were married at the Gandolfo Ranch where they lived with his family a few months until their house was finished. Ten months later their son Theodore was born. Lilian didn't like Austin at first. She found it a difficult adjustment, missed the big trees and found the people too friendly. But she soon loved it dearly!

Lilian started to work at several grocery stores in town, gaining experience for the store she and Bert later owned. They sold the store when their daughter Roberta was born after the war. Soon Lilian would take Roberta with her when she worked at Dory's General Store which her sister was still running. Lilian took over the management of the store when her sister moved to Fallon. She also wrote articles

for the Reese River Reveille, continuing with both activities for over twenty years.

Lilian found retirement boring, so [she] sold Avon, then Amway house-to-house. When Bert got cancer in the sixties, there were just a few people active in the Cancer Society trying to raise money for research and education. Lilian started to become active in the Society, having art exhibits and food sales. She is now president of the Austin chapter of the American Cancer Society and won a pin the last two years for getting the highest per capita for the state. She has many plaques and certificates recognizing her major contribution to the organization.

The Gandolfo's live in the newest, largest and most beautiful home in Austin, high on a hill with spectacular views in all directions. All their lives they dreamed of having their dream home and had the plans since 1972. Eight years ago they were finally able to make their dream come true. Bert enjoys landscaping and caring for their large yard and flower gardens. They especially appreciate having a

home large enough for all the children and grandchildren to come for long holidays.

One of their favorite recreation activity is packing a lunch and driving into the hills and canyons, enjoying the beauty of the region.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Lilian Gandolfo at her home, 100 Paul Street, in Austin, Nevada, and it is August 23, 1993.

Good morning, Lilian. I'm so glad that we were able to include you in the oral history project. Would you first give us your full name?

Lilian Gandolfo: Lilian Cora Gandolfo.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in 1918, in San Diego, California.

What was the month and date?

July 23.

Since this is for the Lander County history, I'm not going to ask you much about your early life, but the one thing I want to find out is, as you were growing up, did you live in San Diego the whole time?

No, my folks lived in and around Fresno most of the time.

When you were going to high school, did you begin to develop certain interests?

Not really.

So I'm going to move you pretty quickly. When you finished high school, where were you living after high school?

Ukiah, California

And what did you do after your high school years?

I come up here right afterwards, to visit my sister [Ruth Emma Dory].

When you say "here," you had a sister here in Nevada?

I had a sister here in a store here at Austin.

And what brought her to Austin?

She married a fellow from Austin at Ukiah.

In other words, she met him in Ukiah?

Right.

And you came to visit her?

Right.

How old were you?

Seventeen.

What did it look like?

It had quite a bit more. There was two ice cream parlors and a dress shop and two grocery stores, and it was quite active at that time. And I helped in the store here for a little while until I met Bert.

Okay now, I have several questions. What kind of a store was it?

It was a grocery store at that time.

What was the name of it?

I don't remember.

Was it just groceries or was it other supplies?

It was just groceries at that time when my sister worked there.

How old was your sister?

She was ten years older than I was.

And who did she marry?

Ray Dory. He was the barber here.

How long did you stay on that first visit?

That's when I met Bert right about then and we married in November.

Now you met him what month?

In July.

And how did you meet?

In the grocery store. [laughs]

And how old was Bert?

About twenty-three I think.

Probably exciting to see a new cute girl in town?

Well, maybe [chuckles], let's put it like that.

So that was very rapid. How did your family feel?

Not happy.

What about your sister? Was she happy that you'd be near her?

Well, I think so, yes. She lived here for several years before I came up here to visit her.

So now where did you marry?

We married at the ranch.

When you say the ranch, what s that?

Bert's folks' ranch. The Gandolfo Ranch.

So when you married, did you just stay right here?

Yes, we did. We stayed at the ranch until January 'till we got our house finished.

I want to know, in as much description as you can give, what the ranch was like and who was living there.

Bert's parents was living there at that time, and some of his brothers and sisters.

Do you know which ones?

Yes, there was Don and his wife Margaret, and Marvin and Billie and Babe.

Two of you were married? Two married couples?

There was Bert's brother Don and his wife, and Bert was working on Carroll Summit, on the construction crew and we just stayed there 'till we got our house fixed which was November, so it was only about six weeks.

About six weeks at the ranch?

Yes.

And what was the living quarters like?

Well they had several bedrooms and we just stayed there. Bert and I stayed in the living room for a while [chuckles] because they had quite a large family, but the house was built across into a very large room where mostly the children slept, and then Bert's parents had a room and Don and Margaret had room and the other girl had a room.

Do you know if there are any pictures of that ranch?

I don't know. Could be that some of the older girls had some.

Now when you said "waited for the house," tell me then what the house was that you both moved into.

It was a home where Bert was born. His folks had had a house here in town, and we took and remodeled two rooms. The kitchen and the dining room were quite large, and the bedroom is all...And we lived in that for several yearn until we remodeled the whole house.

Can you tell me where that was located?

It's on Court Street.

You were just a very young bride. Tell me what your life was like when you first married and you moved into your own house.

Well, it was during Depression, the end of the Depression, so Bert did odd jobs around

until he went to work for the state highway and he worked there for three years. And then just regular ten months after we were married we had a child—just ordinary things that you took care of—the baby and got along. I visited my folks quite often.

Where did you have your baby?

I had him in Ukiah, California.

You went home?

Uh-huh.

How long before you had your baby did you go home?

I didn't go home until I had the baby ten months after I was married.

But the baby was born there.

Right.

So if the baby was born there, you went home before you had the baby.

Right. About a month.

And how did you feel, as such a young girl, having a baby so early and living here in Austin?

I didn't like Austin at first because I was used to people not being real friendly and the people here were quite friendly and forward. I wasn't used to that. I really didn't like Austin for the first year I was married.

So that would have been a very hard adjustment, and you were so young.

Yeah. It's a good thing we got along good [laughs] because otherwise I'd a probably gone home!

Now what about your relationship with your sister and her family?

Oh, we got along fairly well. Older sister tries to boss you a little, you know, but we got along fairly well.

And so you had Theodore?

Yes.

And when was Roberta born?

Almost eleven years later.

We'll want the dates on here after.

Okay, Ted was born September 26, 1936.

When you went back to Ukiah to have your baby, was there a hospital here where babies were delivered?

I'm not sure—there was a doctor here, and he worked at the hospital. Bert's sister's twins was born up here, but I went home to have my baby.

So then tell me when you came back with your baby—of course you're busy with a new baby—but what was your life like and did you begin to become a part of this community?

Right. I did. And several of Bert's brothers and sisters had children at the same time so we just had a little kind of a community deal amongst ourselves most of the time. Cooked dinners together and things like that.

Did your parents come to visit both of you?

My mother came quite often and my father come several years later and spent the summer. But mom come at least once a year. She come home with me when I had the baby.

And what did Austin look like to you?

I asked where the trees were! I was raised right up by where there was big trees and so did my sister. [laughs] That was the first reaction I had. The town of Austin didn't bother me that much. The people seemed too friendly to start with.

Then it seems like they responded to you as an outsider coming in?

Uh-huh. When I had my daughter years later, I had worked in and out around town and I didn't have a baby shower but I received 105 baby gifts! So then I begin to feel like I was in the town. Before that, the family gave me baby gifts and things, but after Roberta was born, people knew me more, you know. And I had worked in and around grocery stores and things like that.

So tell me when you started to do work around town and was that after your little boy went to school?

Yes, more or less.

And I know the school was real close to you?

Yes.

Were you pleased with the quality of the education?

Right. It was fine. I think if people adjusted to what they have and we've had children that's

been doctors and lawyers and engineers and stuff, come out of Austin schools. It's the child themselves that if they work hard enough, they can do anything.

Now as your son was growing up, I know you had a network of all these relatives but when they get to be teenagers, what do the young people, before the park was developed—thanks to your husband—what did they do then?

Well the kids had jitterbug clubs. They'd pack their phonographs around and things like that. Our son was very avid in that kind of stuff.

Where would they dance? In homes?

There was a dance hall down there—it's burnt down there now. There was a dance hall and the people would let the kids...And they did a lot—back of the bar, there was a big room that the kids went in.

Was that where the Acrees played their music for dances?

Uh-huh. And the kids got mostly, down at The Austin, they had the bar in the front and they also had a daughter Ted's age and they had a big room kinda at the back. The Acrees gave Ted his first phonograph and he packed it around, an old winding one and they jitterbugged and had a lot of fun, the kids did.

Did you all go fishing and go to the Kingston Recreation area?

Yes, we did that. Our son's still an avid [laughs] fisherman and sportsman.

You said you started to work, so let's move into that area. Your son's in school and tell me some of the things you did.

I worked in and out around grocery stores while Ted was small.

Like what grocery stores were here?

Well, there was the Austin Mercantile. I worked down there for a while. And then before Roberta was born, Bert and I started which is the Kent's Store now.

Alright now I want to know in detail about that because to an outsider the grocery stores are the heart of the town.

Right.

And so I want to know how you developed it and tell me in good detail about it—and the year.

Alright, let's see that was probably in 1945.

That was during the war?

Right, and we were on rationing and stamps and stuff like that. Some things you only made a cent a can, you know, on different things. And Bert worked on the ration board too. And then we started out with a case of tomatoes and a thing of eggs.

Carton?

Yeah, well no, they were 12 dozen in the thing [a gross]. And we had an order. We were fixing the store and that's the first order we had, and then we developed into a nice little grocery store. Also in there was a post office, where the hotel burnt, and then in that long place there we had this grocery store. We had a butcher shop at the back and we also had a butcher. It was a long narrow building and then it had a storage room in the back. If you

look you can see where the rooms were in the back.

What was the name of the store?

I don't even remember.

Do you have any documents left from the store, any bills or slips of advertising?

No.

Nothing.

We were only in it a year, and during the war I didn't want to have another child, and so as soon as it was over, we sold to our butcher, and he took it from there and built the building across where it's Kent's Store now. We were in there a year and then the next year I had Roberta.

Now we're going to get back to the store. Where did you get the supplies for the store, the foods?

The Kitchen Store from Eureka went to Reno twice a week and brought us fresh supplies and all that stuff.

Who did that?

Ira Kitchen. He had the grocery store in Eureka at that time, and he brought all our supplies to us.

In other words, he delivered and then you'd pay to have it all delivered?

Right.

You'd give him the order?

Right. And also there was things like for vegetables and stuff, if somebody wanted

something special that week, we always kept an order there where they could take and order. Say you wanted some snow peas or something like that, extra, well we'd order that and he'd pick 'em up. And they had a better variety then.

Were you at that time the main grocery store?

Walter Francis had a small store down the street. Walter Francis also moved up, which was the Austin Mercantile at that time, and then we had just the two grocery stores at that time.

Did you do well?

We did fine, but it kind of interfered with our life. Bert was still workin' and we were fillin' shelves at midnight, you know, and stuff like that, and the butcher wanted to buy, so we sold to him.

Did your son, he was about nine then, did he help?

No. He'd help you fill shelves sometimes. He liked to ride his bicycle up and down the street.

But before you opened your own store you worked in some of the other stores?

Yes, I did also work in the Mercantile for a while.

That gave you experience.

Yes.

And so then after you sold the store, the war was over?

Yes, and then I had Roberta, and my sister was still running it but she had changed from

a grocery store into a Dory's General Store, dry goods. So after Roberta was born, I went to work there and I worked until just about [when] Roberta got married.

Now who took care of Roberta?

I just took her with me. She was raised in that store and sat in a box on the counter while I waited on customers.

So what was the name of that store?

Dory's General Store.

And is that the Dory that owns the Chevrolet gas station?

It's his uncle.

Part of family?

Part of the family, yes.

First let's get back a little to the war years. What did you see as an effect of the war here in Austin?

Mostly your rationing. Ted'd wear a pair a shoes out every three weeks at that age and I'd have to borrow a stamp to get him shoes, you know, and stuff like that. It was real hard, working with stamps and taking stuff in the grocery store.

Was there an effect also because of the young men who had to leave to go to the war?

Right, true. But they were also building the big airport at the time we were in the store so that helped us tremendously. So we took and had a good clientele at that time.

Your daughter was born in 1947 after the war. What changes had occurred from the time you arrived here and married in 1935, and 1947: what were some of the changes beside your store?

Right at that time, you had only maybe one—the dress shop had closed. Things were closed a lot during that time. And they had the dry goods store, which I went to work in when Roberta—right after she was born. To me it seemed to decline a little, and then some of the silver mines worked during that time and it would go up and down, just like Austin's always done.

Can you recall when the mining was going up and when workers would come in—could you notice any changes in people in the town or people you didn't know?

Oh, you always have that in Austin where people would come in, a family from New York that was head of the mining company and stuff like that. You always have that right now. You don't know half the people in town. Somebody will say, "Well there's nobody" but if you have a meeting or something you don't know the people either.

Like the forestry, and sheriffs?

Well mining people are here that work at Echo Bay and now they drive back and forth. You don't know those people.

When your son was in high school, did he stay here and work here or did he leave to go to college?

No, he worked here. He went in as undersheriff when he was twenty-three years old, and worked here and then went on to

join the highway patrol and was stationed at Wells and all over, and then he was justice of the peace in Battle Mountain for sixteen years.

Did he live there?

Uh-huh, and still lives there. He's retired as the judge now and has built a big car wash and lives there.

So that's not too far. Now you have this little girl and you're starting all over with elementary school. Did you get active in the school?

Right, we did with both children. We went to their ballgames and everything that they had, you know, and was very active. Bert was head of the PTA for years.

Now, was having two young children an incentive to get that beautiful park and pool built?

Well, our children were married at the time and I think mostly Bert has always wanted to do things for the town and I think that was mostly his idea of doing things for the town. He hates swimming, but he still built a swimming pool for somebody else.

How long did you work in the variety store?

I worked for several years under my sister, and then she moved to Fallon so I took it over and managed it.

What year did she move to Fallon?

Roberta was born in 1947. She [my sister] probably moved there in the middle fifties.

And why?

She married and moved to Fallon.

Oh, she wasn't married?

Her husband died in between. Then she remarried and they moved to Fallon. In fact, the house that Madge Bertrand has was her home. Then I took over the management of the store and worked until 1969, I think, I retired from there.

You said you managed it. Who owned it?

Sarge Agnor and his wife, and Walter Dory and Billie Dory.

So were you mainly it? Were you the one who was mainly there or who else worked there?

Well sometimes Mrs. Agnor worked there and sometimes Billie worked there.

What were some of the things sold in that little variety store?

Anything you wanted: from Levis—mostly we catered to the people that would—working people. We didn't go into high-class stuff, you went in to Levis, work shirts, work boots. And we did also carry a full line of baby clothes and blouses and things like that. Very few ladies' shoes and stuff. We did mostly for the working people, and like Inchauspes bought from us and bought for the sheepherders and stuff like that. And I worked there until just before my daughter got married.

Where did you order all of these wonderful things that you sold?

Mostly from San Francisco and from Salt Lake City.

Now were there catalogs? How did you know what to order?

The salesmen came by, in fact, different ones from different places. Patrick's Dry Goods come about once a month and then ZCMI came about once a month.

Who was that last one?

ZCMI from Salt Lake.

ZCMI. What does that mean?

Zion something, and then Mercantile.

So then they would ship it? You'd order it?

They'd ship it. And then the ones out of Salt Lake, I can't remember exactly what they were, mostly novelty stuff out of San Francisco. Salt Lake you got most of your general merchandise.

So you really had more here at that time, then now?

Oh, by far! By far. That was right in that little building where they sharpened saws and stuff, and we had a nice inventory, and you could buy almost anything you wanted.

Do you have any pictures?

No.

Oh, shame, shame, shame. [light laughter]

Yeah. So anyway, we had general merchandise, almost anything. And if we didn't have it, we always ordered it.

Were you in charge of ordering?

Yes.

That's very responsible.

Bookkeeping and the whole works. I took and did that for twenty-some years. Also working with the newspaper 'cause it was easy to get news while I was in there. And then over the weekends, I would write that stuff up and...

What was the newspaper?

The Reese River Reveille and I worked on that for twenty-some years.

Is that here now?

No.

When you say you wrote for them, do you have samples of some of the things that you wrote from old newspapers?

Well, I've got the newspapers downstairs, a lot of them. Yeah, the fire when the Austin [Hotel] burned.

I mean the articles you wrote?

Yes.

I would like very much for you to select a few for me to copy to add to your interview.

Okay, I shall do that.

So how often would you write for them?

Once a week.

Oh how wonderful! So you were a very busy lady.

Yeah, I've always been very busy! [laughs]

And by then of course, you were not only used to Austin, but you were an active part of the community.

I loved it very dearly by that time, and the people in it. I've always gotten along real good with the people.

And also because you had interesting, responsible work.

Yeah, right.

That's wonderful. I don't want to move away from the store 'till I've picked your brain on everything about it. Can you think of anything more before we leave the store? And tell me how long you worked there?

Twenty-one years. That and the newspaper just about the same time.

And what year did you leave those?

I left 1969, I think it was. The paper I worked for a while longer on.

And why did you?

I was ill. I mean at the store I just was tired. And then the newspaper, which was a few years longer, I begin to have some problems, so I gave it up.

So now I want to get back—when your daughter was growing up, what were her high school days like?

Just an ordinary high school child: dances and plays and things. Very active in school.

What did she do after high school?

She went to work at the bank here and worked five-and-a-half years here, and after she married, she worked a year-and-a-half in Gardnerville.

When she worked in the' bank here, where was that bank, and which bank?

It was Nevada National Bank, and it was where Shanks has got his little curios.

The Trading Post?

Yeah. She worked there until she got married and then they moved to Gardnerville and she worked there for a year-and-a-half until after her first baby was born.

Was her husband a local Austin boy?

No. He was raised in Fallon, I believe, or around. His folks lived in Fallon.

How did she meet him?

He was here with the highway patrol and then was with them several years and then he went to work for the Emergency Medical Services out of Carson, and then he retired from that in July and is working for REMSA, the ambulance place out of Reno now.

So they live in Reno?

No, they live in Carson.

Oh, in Carson City?

Uh-huh. They've been there for twenty-three... Well, when they was in the highway patrol, they were at Gardnerville for quite a

few years, and then they shipped 'em to the lake, and then he took the job in Carson City and they been there thirteen years.

You mean Lake Tahoe?

Yeah.

Now, let's get back to you. You left the store and newspaper which were a big chunk of your life. What did you do with your life then?

I decided I'd be a housewife, and then I was too bored, so I sold Avon for a while, and then sold Amway and things like that.

Did you sell it here house-to-house?

Right—for several years. And then just about a year ago, the women, we didn't have any... They said, "Well, will you get us some?" I said, "Well sure I got a woman in Fallon I can get..." So I've let 'em have it for the last year or two, too.

We do have time, let's get now to one of your other major activities and contributions and that's the Cancer Society. Let's start from the beginning when you got into it and tell me about that.

Well when I first begin to work, I wasn't the head of the Cancer Society. A girl named Betty Nurmi was the head of it. And then she moved to Tonopah and I took it over, which is—I don't even remember—twenty some years ago.

I don't only want to know when you took it over, I want to know how you first got interested and started, not just when you were head of it.

Well, Bert got cancer, and had an operation, and beings that I was already helping her and

she left, I decided I'd take it over because they weren't collecting as much money as I figured that Austin should give. So I got pretty active in it.

I want you to go way, way back to the first time that you joined it, what the society then was and what it was doing.

The people went door-to-door as a thing, and had little activities, like food sales and stuff, to raise money. But their door-to-door project was giving an envelope and puttin' their donation and then handin' it to your neighbor and have 'em put it in. When you got through, you had nothing.

What year are we talking about and what year did you join it? Did you join it soon after you came, or after your children?

No, the children were older. About the time that—just before Bert got cancer.

And when was that? In the sixties?

In the sixties.

We'll get the date. Now at that time, I have several questions. How many were in the Society? Did they meet regularly? What kind of an organization?

We had three or four people at that time that were active. We had a nurse and myself and we'd have meetings—even go to Reno or something else to meetings, you know. They had different—mostly on food sales and stuff like that.

Was the main thing raising money to help people who needed help?

It was raising money for research and things like that mostly. But a big percent of our money goes for research to help cure people. And then after I got into it, I began to have art exhibits and things like that. And I did that several years 'till it kind of washed itself out, and we still had a few food sales and stuff, and sold food at the art exhibit. And then a few years ago, it kind of fizzled out so I just go door-to-door, and I've gone to Reno a few times but I don't go as much as I'm supposed to.

I want to back way, way back now. Really, in a place like Austin, you can't be expected to raise very much money. Is there a state organization that was the one that had everyone involved trying to raise money?

Oh yes.

Was it also an educational society?

There's a big, educational program which we still have in the schools to train the children of what they should do in case of different things. We still have a program that's very active in our school system and for research and also we have patients here. Up until this year—I did this year, but I had to fight for the money, so I was a little disgusted—we had a travel program that we would pay for the people to go in for chemotherapy and radiation and things like that. It mostly was a project to raise money for the Cancer Society which in turn, they would have programs. I had a woman that had to go to San Francisco and we got her a room down there. It was very helpful for the people around here.

Now did they also have—'cause I could see the education part being really strong 'cause you couldn't raise too much money—would

they send someone out to be a speaker to the community or to go to the schools who was knowledgeable?

Once in a while. They haven't the last few years.

But I mean in those earlier years?

Yeah, they did. Now they seem to go more for research than they do helping the people, which makes me.

Did they have support groups so that if people here with cancer, they could sit and advise and talk and encourage?

They call that a Reach Out Program.

Yes, do you have that?

Uh-huh. And if you had breast cancer or something, somebody would constantly help you through this program part. We have all of those available to us as you have in San Diego. The only thing is, I have to ask for those things, or if somebody gets sick, I have to ask for the money to help 'em through these trying times.

Is there a pocket of money in the state so that you don't have to just try and depend on Austin?

Our money goes into the state so they can bring it back. I have been very good—in fact I won a pin for the last two years for gettin' the highest per capita for the state.

Good! Now I want to go back to when you became a leader when that other woman left. Now come into that part of it.

I don't remember exactly when Betty moved to Tonopah. It was in the

sixties someplace. So when she left, I just automatically took over. I had a few people helping me at that time, and then it got so that people would volunteer, really volunteer when it come right down for the drive, and when I was havin' the art exhibit, it was a lot better, because people would bring things in to exhibit, because they figured they may sell 'em or something else.

Where would you have the exhibit and sale?

In the firehouse. And the last one was at the Town Hall, so you know how that hasn't been that many years ago. And then it kinda burned itself out, ya' know, how things do. And now, once in a while, we have a food sale. Most of mine is door-to-door, or beggin' the people. [laughs] And they've been very generous with me, cause I've been on there twenty-some years.

Now, what is your title?

I'm just the president here of the American.

Don't just say lust, what is your title?

[laughs] I'm president of the American Cancer Society here in Austin.

Now are you the one, again, if someone is having a problem, or someone—not just financial help—are you the one that calls for that help?

Right. Anything. Or the memorial services, if somebody wants to donate, I have to take care of that too. So any help or any money transactions at all, I have to do it.

So that's a major role, and I can see it's even more important, because one of the things in

all the interviews and my observance, there's no good medical care right here.

There isn't. But this is what I'm grumbling about is because now I have to fight for the assistance where it used to be very volunteer. I don't think I'm going to stay with it too long.

One of the things, as you yourself have experienced, and as I can see when I try to reach people—like with your husband and others—you have to go to Fallon or Reno.

Right, right. And a couple of meetings I have gone in for the big state meetings, but it doesn't pertain to me that much. They grumble 'cause I won't go, but there isn't that much that I can improve it. I've got the people now so that they automatically donate when I ask 'em, so why would I go in there, pay my way most of the time, and do it? So anyway, they help with your mileage and they help with the room, but the food and everything else you pay for yourself.

Now before we move away from your role—and I will look at your plaques after and maybe later get some pictures of them before we move away from that, is there anything more on that before I ask you about this gorgeous home you have?

This was Bert's and my dream. We were both raised—I was raised during Depression so it was really hard time in our lives, and Bert was raised out on a ranch, and all our lives we dreamed of havin' our dream home. So, eight years ago, we decided if we were going to do it, we were going to do it, whether it took your life savings or not, you were going to do it. We had the plans since 1972.

Had you purchased the lot?

Yes, we had the lot. It was just a hill at that time, you couldn't imagine it coming, but we took and decided at our age and everything, 'cause neither one of us was any chicken, that we decided we were going to build our home, no matter what. We talked it over and Bert says, "If I just live one day in it, it's our dream come true," and we've really enjoyed it.

Who designed it?

We bought commercial house plans. We picked 'em out, we bought the big books until we found what we wanted and we bought the plans.

Now who were the builders?

Lee's Construction out of Fallon.

And how did you furnish it?

Just like anybody else [chuckles] we borrowed the money and we bought the furnishings.

Well, I'm interested not so much in that as being up in the hills here and away from it, where'd you buy it and how was it brought up here?

Most of it we bought from Winnes Furniture in Fallon.

And did they deliver it?

They delivered it.

They could come up the hill?

Yeah, they come up here and delivered it. And we'd been in it two-and-a-half years when lightning hit us and took out this whole center to the tune of twenty-five thousand dollars.

Were you insured?

Yes, and I'll tell you something, you can put it in the record that State Farm was absolutely wonderful. They were wonderful. At the time I had the hutch in the kitchen full of antiques, and in fact five thousand dollars' worth of antiques.

It must have broken your heart!

It did, but all those things mostly were my mother's and my grandmother's, and Bert's grandmother's and things that we can't replace. We've got a few little things that didn't get broke, but most of 'em were. And those that didn't get broke I had in this one and then I transferred 'em back into there.

And who does the beautiful gardening?

Well, we both do that. Bert's been takin' care of it this summer. I've been so busy that he's been watering and takin' care of most of it, but he generally landscapes it and tells where he wants things and takes care of it mostly himself.

Well, I think it's the showplace of Austin.

Thank you.

And I know a little glimpse of your busy life because you have this wonderful family that come, you have a beautiful home, and then you have all that work going into places for medical care. Do you have time for some recreational things you didn't have time for before?

Yes, we do. Bert and I go out—yesterday, he drug me through the hills with hay fever and everything else.

Which hills?

We went over the top, up by the water tank and over into Red Canyon—don't ask me where—and down into Birch Crick [Creek] and back out around. We never know which direction we're gonna go. Then there's several of us that go for coffee in the morning and sometimes we have 'em at each others home and we make some goodies and things like that. We do pretty well. I do a lot of cooking and a lot of canning so it makes me pretty busy all the time.

It sounds like a wonderful life.

I just finished a cancer drive so I've been kinda up to my neck in that. In fact the twentieth, so you know when I finished. I just finished that and I'm real active in that part mostly.

Now is there anything relating to Lander County that you want to share that I have not asked you?

I don't believe so. Been pretty well our life which has been fifty-seven years of marriage that's been very happy.

Looks like you've come a long way and reached goals.

Every Easter all the children come and all the grandchildren and all their family. Our son's children are raised, where our daughter's are just in college and high school and in the fourth grade. They all come, everybody comes at Easter time and makes a big deal.

And if you didn't have the big house, it wouldn't be as nice.

Well we always said we wanted to have a place that all our family could come. If we

have to throw some of 'em on the floor, well that's alright, but we've always wanted that and everybody said, "Well I want a little house after I get old," but I've always wanted our family to feel like they were always welcome.

Wonderful. And from my exploring, which I've done a little bit, especially the Kingston area and yesterday, down as far as Round Mountain, it's the most beautiful scenery in the state.

Oh, it's gorgeous, where we were. We had packed a lunch and went up in the hills and ate. It was really gorgeous. It really was.

Well it's been just a great pleasure interviewing you and learning another segment of life in this beautiful area. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for your contribution.

You're welcome.

LILIAN GANDOLFO PHOTOGRAPHS



LILLIAN AND BERT GANDOLFO, AUGUST 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

LILIAN GANDOLFO

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Lilian Gandolfo

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CARMEN HINMAN

PREFACE

Carmen Hinman's grandparents were all Basques, born in Spain. As a young man of twenty, her father, Ramon Oyarbide, traveled on a ship to the United States, and from New York took a train to Nevada to work at the Berlin mine out of Austin. Austin was a bustling town during the silver mining boom, and her father bought a bar there. He later bought another bar in Battle Mountain, where he met Carmen's mother, Carmen Acorda. She was also born in Spain and was working as a maid. They stayed in Battle Mountain the rest of their lives.

Carmen grew up in a family of seven children in a house built by her father. Besides running the bar, Mr. Oyarbide also drilled wells, and leased land to raise cattle.

The Oyarbide's were part of a Basque community in Battle Mountain, and Carmen describes a happy childhood, growing up in a home filled with the Basque culture—Basque music and dances, Basque foods, and the

Basque language. Everyone helped with the chores.

Carmen describes in detail the stores and buildings on Front Street where the family shopped for clothes, shoes and staple supplies.

Carmen had two daughters during a brief, early marriage. Before the divorce, they moved into the two-story house at 685 North First Street, built in 1918. Lela Dusang owned and operated a boarding house for teachers. Carmen followed Mrs. Dusang's practice and had roomers—mostly teachers, to help with their income. As the children got older, Carmen worked as a cashier at the Nevada Hotel.

Carmen married Clinton ("Butch") Hinman in 1953. She tells of working with Butch in the development of the Owl Club, the restaurant and motel for twenty-five years, until they sold it in 1982.

An artistic and creative woman, Carmen started renovating the house gradually over the years. In more recent years, she has had additions built, and redecorated the rooms,

creating one of the most elegant and charming residences in Battle Mountain.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Carmen Hinman at her home, at 685 North First Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on May 15, 1993.

Good morning, Carmen. I'm so pleased to be here to interview you this morning. We got Butch's interview, and now we want to hear your life story. And would you please first tell me your full name?

Carmen Hinman: My name is Carmen Hinman.

And where were you born?

Right here in Battle Mountain, Nevada.

Hm, a native! And what was the date?

August 28, 1918

I want to ask you about your grandparents on your mother's side and where were they born?

My mother's mother was born in Asteaga, Spain.

And her father?

I'm not positive about that. He was not born there, though. He was born somewhere in Spain, but I don't know where he was born.

Were they Basques?

They were Spanish Basques.

And what about your father's parents? Do you know anything about them?

They lived in Mendata, Spain. I think my father's mother died when he was quite young, and that's really all I know about him.

Which member of the family first came to the United States?

My father [Ramon Oyarbide] came to the United States first. He came to work at the Berlin Mine out of Austin.

I have a lot of questions to ask: Number one, how old was he then? do you know? did he tell you?

I figured he was around twenty when he came.

How did he hear about the mine?

I really don't know.

And did he ever tell you how he traveled to get here and then all the way to Austin, which is a distance from ports?

Yes, he came by boat, or ship, and I remember he talked about Liverpool, England, and then coming over. And from New York he took a train. He was trying to go to Reno, I think, on the train.

Were there other Basques already established that he might be joining?

Yes, I'm sure there were.

And so he went to the mines in Austin?

Out of Austin, the Berlin Mine.

And what kind of mine was the Berlin Mine?

I really don't know about that. I should know, but I don't.

That's alright. Maybe silver? Do you know how long he stayed in Austin?

He bought a bar in Austin. He must have known how to speak English, so he probably stayed long enough at the mine to learn a little bit. Then he bought a bar in Austin. Later he bought a bar in Battle Mountain, so he had the two bars at the same time.

When he was in Austin, did he remain a single man?

I think he was married during the time he had the bar.

Where did he meet your mother [Carmen Acorda]?

Right here in Battle Mountain.

Now, when he was in Austin, did he go back and forth between Battle Mountain and Austin?

I'm sure he did, yes.

Did your mother or father ever tell you how they met?

Well, I do know she came here and she was working as a maid for Crebo Hancock and his wife. She was there working and I think that's where he met her.

Do you know what brought her to Battle Mountain? Was it with her parents or was she a grown-up?

I don't know.

Did they ever talk to you about the kind of living accommodations—did they live in Austin or Battle Mountain, or both?

Battle Mountain.

Let's bring your father through. You said he had a bar—did he ever talk to you and tell you what the name of it was or anything about it?

Well, I think it was called The Corner Bar. It was located where the Owl Motel is right now.

That's in Battle Mountain?

Battle Mountain.

But what about the bar in Austin?

I'm not sure.

He didn't talk to you much? Was he a quiet man?

He talked to us, we just didn't listen!

When they were living in Battle Mountain, when were you born?

I was born in 1918.

Were they living here long before you were born?

Well I had a sister born six years before I was. They were married in Battle Mountain

so they probably lived here at least seven or eight years before.

How long during that early period did you live in Battle Mountain after you were born? How long did they stay here?

They remained here the rest of their lives.

I see, they remained. So let's follow your dad a little bit in your early years. Did he run the bar during that period?

No, he had a manager. His name was Marion Machedo. I still remember him.

Did he do other things besides run the bar?

Yes, he did. He used to drill wells.

And where was that?

Right here in Battle Mountain. He's dug many wells around here.

On the ranches, or for homes?

Mostly in the homes.

Was that his own business?

Yes, it was.

He did that himself?

Uh-huh.

In your home, did your mother and father speak Basque or English?

Well our mother, 'til she died, spoke Basque. We answered her in English!

[chuckles] And my father never talked Basque to us, never.

What did he talk to your mother? What language did they speak together?

Basque.

Did you learn it?

I can understand it, but I did pick up Spanish real easy.

Was their Basque close to the Spanish language?

No.

It's very unique, isn't it?

Very different.

Did the people on the Spanish side speak Spanish and Basque and the people on the French side speak French and Basque?

I'm sure that's the way it was.

Was there a Basque community when your family lived here?

Yes, there was. I can remember that there must have been seven or eight families, and when we'd go to the church dinners and Knights of Columbus doings, I remember there was many, many Basques.

You said "When you went to the church." Was there a church where the Basques joined?

No. Well, we all went to one church—everybody. But I remember all these Basque families, particularly.

What church was that?

Catholic church.

And were most of the Basques Catholic?

All the married Basques were Catholics, but of course there was a lot of shepherders here at that time, and they just got away from the church. People like that, the single people, don't go as much.

No, but were they raised Catholic in Spain and France?

Definitely. Yes, they went to church all the time.

Now, from your very earliest memories, I want to know a little bit about first, your home life, from the time you can remember until maybe early grammar school. What was your home life like? What was your house like?

The house where I was born still stands. I'm not saying I was born in the house, but I remember living in the house right across from where they built later.

Where was that?

I remember growing up as a child it was on North Reese Street, and it still stands.

How long did you live in that house?

Probably I was about eight or ten years old when we moved over to the other house. We built it.

Now, when you say "the other house," is this the one on Reese Street?

Yes, it's on North Reese Street too.

Let's go back to where you lived before you were eight, the first house. What was your home like? Describe the kind of house and the interior and whether there was running water. Just a little description of the first place.

There was no running water on North Reese Street. My mother used to go across to—she talks about a lady that lived on Trescott Street that probably had a well or something, and she carried all of her water to wash and everything. Then I guess my father started drilling wells, and he drilled about two or three down there on that property.

Now when you say "that property," is that your house, or where she went to get [the water] on Trescott?

No, our house.

Now, is that the first or second house that we're talking about?

I'm talking about the first house.

Was there indoor plumbing?

There was not in the first house.

How far from the house was the outhouse?

Oh, just go out a few feet. You know, fifty, sixty feet, yards. And that's where we all went.

Even in cold, stormy weather?

Even in cold weather! [laughs]

How did you handle taking a bath?

Oh, we all took a bath in a round tub, I can remember that. And as my sister—she was six years older, the oldest sister—she was the one that gave the baths. I can remember that.

How many children in the family?

Well, when I was born I was the fifth one and she had five children in six years.

Oh, my!

Before I was born, the second child died at probably the age of three or four years old, with diphtheria.

Oh, how sad.

Then the fourth one died as a little girl.

Do you know what that was from?

No, I can't remember. My father has told me many times, but I forgot.

So then how many were left? Three of you?

Then there were three. We went on to have four more. There were seven of us that grew up together.

Really?! So where were you in the line of all these children?

I was the fifth in the original family. After the two died I was the third one.

In this busy household what were the sleeping arrangements for so many children?

I can't remember the first house, because as I grew older we went to the other house that had four bedrooms.

What year did you go to this bigger house?

I would say about, let's see, 1928 or something like that.

And where was that house located?

Directly across the street, north of the first house.

And by that time what was your father doing that he was able to get a bigger house?

I think he was drilling wells at that time. And he also had a dry farm out towards the Betty O'Neal [Mine] out here. However, he didn't do very well on that, but we used to go there in the summer and stay. We enjoyed that.

So were things prospering a little bit when he got the big house?

We never had very much money.

But were the houses reasonable then? property reasonable, to get a bigger house?

I think he probably built it.

Oh, he built it!

I don't know as he did all the work himself I can remember a carpenter by the name of Paddy Bennett that came. I guess he made a little money. In the meantime, I think he sold his bar in Austin. Prohibition came in and he closed the bar here. So maybe he had a little extra money then.

Now what was the name of the bar here?

The Corner Bar.

What corner was that on?

Right where the Owl Motel is now.

Right there, okay. Tell me a little bit about the kind of a person your mother was, with all these children. It must have been a very hard life.

She worked very hard. She milked cows. Eventually they got cows. She never taught any of us to milk a cow. She did it herself. Very hard worker. My mother loved people. She loved company.

Even with all the children!

Always. She'd say, "Come back again, come back again!" [chuckles] Yeah, she loved company. My father was more quiet. I think he was a pretty intelligent man. I don't think he went past the third grade, but he was real smart with mathematics.

A natural thinking mind! In this busy household, I'm sure everyone must have had chores. What kind of chores did you have?

Well when we got older it was always "make a cake." Saturdays we always washed clothes.,

Everybody helped? How did you wash clothes?

Okay, as I remember, there might have been a washboard early on—I'm sure there was, early on in my youth—but I remember Mama got one of the first washing machines.

The kind of wringer kind?

Uh-huh, Maytag.

Describe the process. I mean, for those that don't know those machines...How did you go through the process of washing?

Well the first thing we did—now this is after we moved to the other house where we had water and a bathroom.

Did you have a laundry room?

We had what we called "the wash house" behind the house, which still stands, with the stationary tubs. We thought that was wonderful!

And this was a separate little building, not attached?

Separate building, not attached.

So you could hide all the old dirty clothes back there!

I guess so. And we...

Now who's We"?

We, my sisters and I, would wash on Saturday, and we would carry buckets of water from the house round the back to wash the clothes. And then we would fill these stationary tubs, because we didn't have water out there. And then we'd just wash them, put them through the wringer, rinse them and hang them, and that was it.

Did you hang them outside on lines?

Oh, yes.

What did you do when it was rainy and snowy?

I guess we hung them in the house and around, I suppose.

Tell me what kind of recreation, or did your family have recreation or some fun times within your family? Or was there too much work?

Oh, we always had a good time together—oh, fun! And I can remember as little kids we'd go out and we didn't have toys, dolls, or anything—we'd just go out and make mud pies and play marbles. Had a lot of fun like that.

With your own family, or with neighbor kids?

With our own family, with neighbor kids, some of the kids from town. As we went to school, you know, we had more friends.

Yes, we'll talk about school a little later. Was there any music in your home?

Well, I can remember getting our first radio, if that's the kind of music you mean.

Any kind.

We loved the radio. Well, Mary might tell you this, but she was about six, she started playing the piano, by ear, and she was great!

Oh, and you had a piano in the house?

We had a piano in the house. It might have come from one of the bars.

Oh, I see. Is Mary younger than you?

Mary is two-and-a-half years younger than I am.

And what about your older sister who was six years older?

She was always just like a mother. She could cook, she could clean—she was very organized. We all took piano lessons: I remember my oldest sister did, the second sister used to try to play the violin and we all made fun of her!

Squeak, squeak?

Yes! [chuckles] And then I took piano lessons, and then Mary just came up as a natural, and when my mother gave her lessons she just totally quit the piano. But then she picked it up again when they quit. But we always had fun together.

Was there any Basque music, any songs?

Oh, my mother loved Basque music. Yes, my mother loved Basque music. My father was a man that never danced in his life, so he probably wasn't very full of rhythm. But my mother loved music. Of course we didn't have a phonograph for years, you know. But then later we got the Basque records. And then my oldest sister learned to do the jota which is the Basque dance.

Where did she learn that?

Just by watching other people, you know.

Where did they dance?

Right at the house.

Other friends would come and you'd dance in the house?

Uh-huh.

Do you have any of those Basque records left?

I may.

If you could find it, it really would be very good to be sure that it's saved. If there's a Basque exhibit in the museum, or if we do a video or something where we could use background music. I'd appreciate that.

All right.

Is there any sheet music?

I doubt that.

But the records would be very important. And are there special kinds of Basque foods that your mother cooked that we might not know about in other sections of the country? Are there typical Basque foods that were part of your regular meals?

We had soup every day, made from scratch.

Were there some That were more Basque than American?

Well, they're more like what you find in the Basque hotels today, with cabbage and all kinds of vegetables. And then lots of chicken soup. Like the American people will eat beans for a main dish. Not my mother—that was always a side dish. And then we had codfish, lots of codfish. My mother and father both loved fish. They came from a country where they had lots of fish. And a long time ago it was easy to get fresh fish. I mean, they'd bring them from Pyramid Lake and bring them from around, and we had lots of fish.

Is there a special Basque sauce or a way that they cooked fish that might be different from others?

Well, there's a bacailau, which is dried codfish. You've heard of that, haven't you? And she used to cook that a lot but I don't know how to cook it.

Did she teach you to cook?

We all cooked.

Did she bake her own bread?

Yes. Oh, we loved the bread when we'd come home from school—we were just starved. But you see, she had to get somebody to teach her all that. Well, maybe they taught her to make bread in Spain—but like to make jam and to can and everything, she'd have her American friends teach her.

Now back where your mother lived, she didn't live on a ranch then?

No, my mother never lived on a ranch.

Do you know what kind of life she lived?

You mean in Spain?

Yeah, in Spain.

She lived in a big, old house that was in disrepair, I'm sure, and they all grew their own vegetables and they all had a cow, which stayed almost right in the house—you know how they did. They just were almost self-sufficient as far as food. Now, I just do want to tell you when my mother first married my father, she lived in some houses that were owned by Lemaire. Do you know where the Lemaire Motel is, behind Pete Lemaire's store?

Yes.

There were two houses there, and my mother lived in one of them, because my father was always a big friend of the Lemaire's that came from France originally. So she said that the Lemaire's used to come over and talk to her, and she couldn't understand a word they said, but they got along real well. She still liked them. When she was able to understand everything, they were still friends.

What language were they speaking to her?

English.

English, I see. And she was still speaking Basque. Now let's go back to your childhood, and then when you're starting grammar school. And tell me about your early elementary school days.

Well, we started school with Miss [Eliza] Pierce, who had the first and second grade. I just remember we were so happy when we learned to read. I just don't remember very much. We just went through school with the same teachers, you know, like the first and second had one teacher. And then we had another teacher for third and fourth, and another for fifth and sixth, and a teacher for the seventh grade, and a teacher for the eighth grade.

Were the first and second grades in one room?

In one room.

How many kids would there be in your classroom?

When I graduated there was probably fourteen or fifteen.

Let's go back to elementary days.

Okay. So there was probably that many.

Was that in the building that's now the courthouse?

Yes.

That was the grammar school?

Yes.

Did you have to climb steps to go upstairs?

Yes.

What did you do, as you progressed grades you got higher-up in steps?

[chuckles] No, we'd start and at the top of the stairs there was a teacher called Mrs. Rose who played the phonograph and we would march and she would go like that [moving arms like a conductor], and we would all march up the stairs.

Was that kind of fun?

It was fun!

That's a very good idea. Everyone would not fool around on the stairs.

That's right!

Did you come home for lunch?

We came home, walked home for lunch at twelve o'clock, ate, went back by one o'clock. We did that every day.

That gave you exercise! And what about recess? What did you do at recess?

We played on the swings and we played on the rings when we had them, and we played ball and chased one another.

Uh-huh, a lot of fun. Were there a variety of kinds of students? For instance, were there Mexicans? were there any blacks? was there a mixture of the kinds of students in the classroom?

We had quite a few Mexican families whose father usually worked on the railroad. We grew up with a big family called the Lunas—they had about fifteen children.

Oh my!

They did. I didn't have any of them in my class—they were all a little bit younger. We had one black family in Battle Mountain, called the Berrys. And there was one girl who was a year older than I was.

What about the Indian children?

They had a separate school.

And where was that?

It was behind the courthouse. I have a picture of it.

Oh, I want to see that! Now, did you mingle at recess time, or were you always segregated?

Well the Indians seemed to be, as I remember, by themselves, but we played with the other ki the Negro family and the Mexicans.

But they went to your school.

Yes, they did.

How long was the Indian school a separate school, do you remember?

I don't.

Like in high school, were they in your classes in high school, or still separated?

They were in our classes in high school.

In high school by then.

I think so. Yeah, I think so.

Then tell me, as you progressed, was elementary through eighth grade?

Uh-huh.

What were some of the subjects and interests that you started to realize you liked more than others?

Well I always liked English grammar, and I liked American history, but I didn't like ancient history at all. And let's see, I was a pretty good speller then. I liked most all classes.

Did you have any cultural classes like art or music?

We had art, and we had music, which I loved. We had good teachers. They taught us music appreciation and things that I don't even know if they get nowadays.

I think they take music out when they run short of funds.

But that was fun, and I enjoyed that

So you liked going to school.

Yes, I did.

Now, when it was summer and there was no school, what did you do in the summers? taking you just up to the eighth grade as a child. What kind of summers did you have?

Well, we'd go to the river to swim, and my mother was frightened to death that we would drown, but we would go anyway.

Did you ever go camping, or leave home, get out of Battle Mountain?

Sometimes we'd go early in the morning to the river and we'd make a fire and eat our breakfast.

Do you mean the family, or friends?

No, just friends.

The kids and friends.

I can remember my older sister—I think she was a Girl Scout, and they always had a camp somewhere, and I was with her sometimes.

In the summertime when there wasn't school, did you have more chores that you had to do then?

We always got up and had to work. I can remember being so tired when I was growing, but we had things to do! But my mother never made us get up early in the morning to do it—she let us sleep as long as we wanted.

As long as you got your chores done.

And then one of us would scrub the kitchen, the other one would wash the windows. It was a lot of work.

What about ironing and sewing?

When we would come home after school we always put out the ironing board and iron. That was one thing we almost had to do every night. But sewing, my mother was not a good sewer and she didn't teach us, and she did not teach us to knit or crochet or anything.

What about mending?

Well, we did mend a little bit

Where did you shop for your clothes and shoes and those kinds of things?

Well, we used to just say "Andy Olano's store," and he had everything. I don't remember if he had girls' shoes and things and clothes, but it was a men's store, I think, mostly.

Where was it located?

It's located now where the building "Not Just Antiques" is.

Oh, yes, it's still here?

The building is still there, yes.

Oh, but not the store.

No, not that store. [pause] Oh, I know! There was a store for families and I think it was the Mendive Store.

And where was that?

It's now part of the Owl Club. And it had a hotel at the top. It was a narrow store, but as I remember now, he used to carry women's and girls' clothes and things, and probably we bought them there.

Did you ever shop through catalogs, like Sears?

Oh, yes, I think we probably did. Yes, I think we did.

Where did you get your other supplies, your staple supplies? Like canned things or your sugar, your wheat—where did you get all that?

Well, there was a store here first that was Horton Mercantile, and I can remember my father buying there. And then Swackhamer's Store came later, and it was a nice store and we bought lots there.

Now let's move into your high school years. I want to ask you a lot about that because you were older and you'll have a lot of memories. First, tell me what your impression of Battle Mountain was when you were starting high school as a teenager.

There was a store right on the corner where the Owl is now, and it was called Horton's Mercantile. And there were two buildings together. One of them was dry goods—in fact, that's where we bought a lot of our clothes too. And the other was groceries. And then there was another building. I don't remember, I think it was a restaurant. Then there was what we used to call Sam Ballin's bar, Ballin and Eaton's bar. They're all now the Owl Club. Then we went on and there was the E.S. Mendive store. He had a big business and I think he dealt in, like, coal and clothes. Then there was a bank, a small bank that's now part of the drugstore where the Hallmark is. It was called, at first, as I remember, the Nevada State Bank. Then there was the drugstore—it's always been there since I can remember. Then there was the Nevada Hotel, and right next to the Nevada Hotel there was a little men's clothing store called the Ramsdell

Store. It now belongs to the Nevada Hotel. I can just see him yet, David's grandfather, David Ramsdell. Then there were two more buildings. They are now the Owl Motel, but one of them was a drugstore, not at my early recollections, but later. Oh, I know! one of them was a butcher shop, as I remember, and the next was that Corner Bar. And that was the main street [Front Street].

That was it?

Then you went across and the Lemaire Store was just like it is now, only they've taken in a few more buildings.

Is that where the town ended? Right after the Lemaire Store, was it open beyond that pretty much?

Well, there were two houses there, see, my mother lived there.

But no more businesses?

I don't think so. That big house where Donna has her diner now, that might have stood when I was little, and it was a rooming house.

Oh, I see, for the workers on the railroad?

Or whatever.

Now going in the other direction, going out. What was in that direction?

Okay, as I remember, there was Shovelin's Supply where Lander Building is now. Shovelin Supply. And right next to Shovelin's Supply was the Shovelin home, which they have now incorporated into the Lander Building. But they lived right there on Front

Street. And going further down where the Kwik [Fast Foods] is now, there was two homes and one of them was a telephone office, and the lady that operated the office lived right there. The next one was a rental. And then that's about as much as I can remember.

So it was a pretty small town.

Yes, it was.

I know that the railroad track is there. Were the trains running through Battle Mountain?

I can remember the trains running and the passenger trains stopping and the conductor coming out and he looked so nice. And they'd wait for passengers, and it was just so interesting.

Did you get used to that wonderful train sound and the whistles? Did you hear that?

Uh-huh, we'd get used to it. I still hear them.

Did you ever ride a train?

Not 'til I was about thirty-three years old.

Was there any recreation place for young people, like a youth center or a movie house or a dance hail? Anything like that yet?

There was a movie house, and it's over there where the Silver Dollar Bar is now. And they eventually got movies, maybe when I was about ten. That was also a dance hail. Yes, we went to all the dances. In the summer the Catholic people would send nuns out here to teach us catechism and the seminarians. We had a little bit of recreation there. We didn't worry about recreation like they do now

because we just worked and stayed home. You had big families, you played with the kids.

Did you ever go horseback riding?

Yes, my father later on had cattle and I did ride horses, yes.

Wherever the cattle were, like a little ranch?

Yes.

How old were you when he had that place and you could ride horses?

Oh, I probably was twelve, from then on until he sold that.

Did all the kids go?

Yes, we all went.

And where was that located?

Well, what he had was leased land. It's right north over here, and he had cattle and he leased the land.

Was that activity besides other work? Or did that become his main occupation?

Later that became his main occupation, yes.

And was it lucrative enough to support the family?

It was, uh-huh.

Good. Was there a little place to stay there, or was it so close to home that you didn't have to travel far?

No, there was no place to stay there. In the summer, as I remember, I used to cook when we cut the hay, and I think we stayed in a tent.

Okay, in other words, you'd all work out there? all go out and work?

No, there was a building there, because I used to stay in that building, I can remember.

Did he raise alfalfa hay for the cattle?

To cut and bale for the winter.

I see, okay. Did your mom go out there too?

No.

She was too busy in the house?

No, she did not go out there.

If she had time, did she like the outdoors and ranching?

I think so.

Okay, so back to high school years. Tell me some of the subjects and what kinds of subjects you liked during your high school years.

Well, I still liked English grammar. I'm sure we had it in high school. And I liked Spanish because I picked it up so quickly.

Did they teach you Spanish?

Yes. I liked that, especially the first year I learned everything I know because the second year we did not have a very good teacher, I didn't think. But of course I'd heard Spanish most of my life because my

mother had a lot of Mexican friends, and then she would talk Spanish. So I picked it right up. I liked algebra, but geometry I did not like.

Did you have any glee club or band or any music?

No band, but we had glee club.

Did you sing in that?

Yes.

Did you perform?

Yes, we would have little plays once a year or so, we did, yes.

Did you start to like the fellows by high school?

Oh yes!

Did you have any special boyfriends?

Oh, no.

Just kind of fun for dances?

Uh-huh.

So then as you were getting to the end of high school, were you still helping around the house? Or when did you get your first little job where you got paid?

Well, I was still helping around the house, and then I married three months after I got out of high school.

Was that someone from your high school?

No, it wasn't

Okay, do you want to tell me about who you met and how you decided to get married? Where did you meet him?

Right here. He was a Battle Mountain boy.

So you got married. And then where did you live?

I lived downtown in a rented house for about three or four months and then my parents had quite a few rentals, and I moved down here.

You were about only seventeen, right?

Eighteen.

How did your parents feel about that? or were people marrying that young?

Well, they liked him. They did want me to go away and get educated, but I didn't. I was the only one in the family who did not.

Were you the one who married the earliest?

Yes.

Did you know him very long?

Yes, quite a while.

Whatever you want to tell me, take me through the early years of your marriage. Did you have children? and what was your life like? Just whatever you want to tell me.

About fifteen months after I was married I had my first little girl.

And what is her name?

Her name is Sherry. Then...I lost a baby, and then I had another one about six years after Sherry and that's Connie. She lives in Reno. And then we were divorced.

Did you do any work during those six years?

No.

You took care of your home and your children.

And I did a lot for my mother. I used to wash her clothes.

Oh, you would still help.

Oh, yeah.

So then you divorced. Then did you live in the same house?

We had moved from over there to this house about two years before we were divorced.

Oh, this house. Okay, the one you're in now, a beautiful home.

Uh-huh. It was not this way when we got here. This was originally a rooming house. They had their own private entrance, and this little old lady that built the house [Lela Dusang] had a big table here and she would cook for them. She was a marvelous cook. She took in a lot of teachers and a lot of people like men that needed a place to eat.

If they were working and bacheloring here?

Uh-huh.

So then you bought it from her?

No, she left it to a little old man that helped her. She lived to be about ninety and she didn't have any family and this little man rented from her, so she left it to him. He then sold it to the people across the street, Frank Williams. They sold it to a man by the name of Charlie Caldwell, and then we bought it from Charlie Caldwell.

Oh, really?! Now how many years did it go through all those hands?

About seven or eight.

So when you bought it, was it kind of in disrepair?

Well, the walls were not nice. My father told me this was built during World War I when you couldn't get very good materials. And the walls weren't nice, and they were bumpy, but they were all papered. And the floors were all carpeted. This lady really liked nice things. But Charlie Caldwell leased this to the Nevada Hotel for their help, and he told me they took a lot of things. He left it like it was, with all the nice furniture. And he said they took a lot of nice things from here. And it had only one bathroom, and that was upstairs.

Oh, my goodness! Now when you bought it was there furniture or rugs or anything in it?

Yes, there was some furniture. The upstairs was totally furnished, and there were rugs on every floor. And there was some furniture which still remains here.

Now, when you divorced, did you stay here with the children?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about your life with your little kids when you were still mated. Was there anything new to tell about Battle Mountain, what was happening here? before we move on to when you lived here after your divorce.

I don't think anything. There was nothing real dramatic. There was one mine, the Natomas Mine, that was producing and brought a few more people in.

When you lived here, did you room out, have boarders here?

I did—not boarders, roomers. I took mostly teachers.

Okay, and was that after or before your divorce?

Before and after.

So that helped with the income?

Oh yes.

How many bedrooms are there?

There were four. Now there are three up there.

So you had two daughters. Then after you divorced, did you continue taking roomers to help you?

Yes.

When you divorced then, as your kids were getting bigger, did you go out to work?

I did, I went to the Nevada Hotel and I was a cashier there for about three years, I guess.

And what year was that when you were a cashier?

I was about thirty. About 1950.

What shift did you work?

Different shifts.

Would your kids go over to your mom's if you were working and join the rest of the family?

Yes.

They were lucky to have family support.

My girls grew up, really, with my—especially my older girl—grew up with my sisters. And I had a brother, and she was just like their sister and brother. The other one came six years later, so they were gone, mostly to college and around.

Okay, and so they had a nice extended family.

They did.

In your life with them, you were working part of the time: tell me a little bit about your life with your daughters and the roomers here in your house. What was your life like then?

Well [chuckles] just an ordinary life.

Were there changes happening in Battle Mountain? This was going through the Depression.

Things had picked up. See, the Depression was in about 1936? I, as a girl, do not remember the Depression very much, because we always had plenty to eat.

Uh-huh, with your own growing of your food.

Uh-huh. I know there wasn't much cash around, but we grew up not having too much but having enough. So when the Depression came, we didn't really notice it.

Uh-huh, because your father wasn't depending on someone firing him.

That's right.

What happened when the war started and fellows started to get drafted? What was it like in the town during the war years?

Well, you know, I really didn't go to town that much, and I can't remember.

It didn't affect your life? No one close to you left?

No. My brother did go to the Navy. My husband, just at the very end, went for his examination and he didn't pass.

So life was just going on about the same.

Uh-huh.

How were your mom and dad during that period? Were things going just the same?

Yes, I think so.

Was life getting easier for your mom as the children started to leave?

Yes.

Did she start into any special activities in town? or more social? or what did she do?

No, no, you know those old Basque ladies stayed home a lot, but she did like to go to Altar Society.

What society?

Altar Society—that's a Catholic Society. And she liked to go to church, but she had company coming and going all the time. She loved it.

And where did they come from? Were they Basque friends?

Basque and American—just everybody.

Would they come from other places like Austin?

Oh, yes, and Elko and Winnemucca.

One of the things I wanted to ask was about the Basque festivals. I know there's one coming up in Winnemucca that I'm going to, my first experience. When did the Basque festivals start in this region?

I'm not sure, but I think I'll the 1970s.

Oh, more recent?!

I think so.

I see. Was your mother, or were you involved at all in these festivals?

No, we weren't but we used to go.

Did a lot of people from Battle Mountain go?

I'm sure they did. Right now I know the Basque men go—they love it.

When you say "the Basque men," the women...

Well, see, I know a lot of Basque single men that came here to work in the mines, and they always tell me they went to the Basque festival.

I see. Then moving along, was Battle Mountain changing between the time you described it and after the war—had it changed very much?

Oh, about 1950, I think, things began to prosper after the war.

Was there more mining going on?

Well, no there wasn't, I don't think. The Natomas [Mine] had closed about 1955. Let's see, in 1953 or 1954 the American Smelter came in to drill what they called the Duval Mine at that time. And that was the beginning of big mining in this town.

Okay, so that started a rise in the economy.

I think so.

People coming in?

Yes, I think so.

Were you still taking roomers in your home by then?

No.

And so by then your children are getting bigger. After you worked as a cashier in the Nevada Club did you work any other places?

No, I did not.

I know that you then got married to Clinton Hinman. Do you want to tell me a little bit about your developing friendship and when you got married?

Well, we went to school together and he had never been married. He was just around here, and he owned the Midway Store. Now

that was the Mendive Store, part of the Owl Club now. And he also owned a butcher shop. That's across the alley, right next to the Silver Dollar. And we got married and then I worked in the store.

Now, before you got married, did you start, after the divorce, going together?

Yes.

And how long after the divorce did you marry?

Three years.

Then this was your home and he joined you here?

Uh-huh.

When he joined you, had you already started fixing this gorgeous house?

No, it wasn't even paid for, and my husband owned half of it. We paid him off, and there was the little debt to my uncle which we paid off. There was a little debt to Charlie Caldwell that we bought it from, so we bought the house.

Now, how old were your daughters by the time you got married?

Oh, one was fifteen and the other was eight or nine.

How did they take to their new step-dad?

Fine, especially the little one.

You said you started to work. Tell me about that.

In the grocery store.

Oh, because he had a grocery store and you started to work there?

Yeah.

When the kids were in school?

Yes.

And did you kind of like that?

Oh, I loved to work, yes.

You like people.

In the public, yeah.

So then let's move a little through those years. I'm sure your daughters were pretty independent with a big family around them.

Uh-huh.

So then begin to describe your life with Clinton and with the development of both the business and the beautiful home. Start describing, after 1953, what your life—both your lives together—was like.

I think it was about 1955 when Butch bought us the small Eaton Baum Bar building. I'm not sure of that date. Is that important?

No.

Okay. And it had a small restaurant and a bar. I think he got a manager and we were still in the store. Then he sold the store to Don Lake and we went over to the Owl Club—or he did—bought another building, added more restaurant. He leased the restaurant first, and then when we got a little bit bigger there, I helped him in the restaurant. At the end we

owned five buildings there, made the Owl Club, and then I helped him all the time.

Hmm, quite a businessman.

Yeah.

Has a lot of vision?

Yeah. Well, Battle Mountain was in need of that at that time. It was growing, more people.

But there's a lot of times towns have a need, but it takes a certain person to fill that need.

I guess so.

So tell me then, when you were helping him, specifically the kinds of things you did.

When I was helping him?

Yeah, or working with him—not helping him—working with him, developing the Owl Club.

Well first, before we had the restaurant, it was leased at that time, we had a little gift shop and I took care of that. I didn't go all day until about six o'clock at night. And then the two girls were here.

Now where was the gift shop?

Right in the present Owl Club, just a couple of little counters.

Like the way now there's Indian jewelry in the Nevada Club Restaurant?

Yes. And then later we took the restaurant and I helped him hire the girls and make the menus and things like that, busied the dishes

and things. I never had to cook, and I never waited table, per se, just wait table. But I did help him with the girls. And we got bigger and bigger, so we had over one hundred employees.

Oh, my! Over a hundred!

Yes, we did. That was including in the motel too, see.

Oh, now when did the motel develop?

Well, I think it's about thirty years old now.

So first it was the Owl Club, then the restaurant, then the motel?

The Owl Club, the restaurant—which took in four buildings. You know, the nice dining room they have?

Yes.

Okay, well, when we got that, then we bought the two buildings on the end of the block and made the small motel.

I see. And so you were both managing all of that?

Uh-huh.

About how many hours did you work?

I didn't work as much as he did, but I was available all the time. But he worked long hours—long: long hours.

What developments were happening in Battle Mountain? Did the motel fill? Were there a lot of workers who would use that as a during-the-week home? What kind of people?

Well, there were some tourists. At that time, there was only one big motel, which was the Big Chief. And then there was the small motel behind Donna's Diner, and then there was a Bell Court. And then we came along and it was new and everybody likes a new motel, but it was small. We took a lot of Bell Telephone, Sierra Pacific, and some tourists, and mostly workers that would stay during the week.

So it was very successful?

Yes, it was.

Then they could eat in the restaurant and gamble?

Yes.

Now tell me, was that casino there right from the start?

Yes.

Can you tell me—coming from a state where we don't have gambling, and for people who don't know—when you have the machines, who owns the machines and all the gambling equipment?

Well, you can lease them, and then you split the profits, but we bought ours outright. So they belonged to us and we got all the money from them.

So you bought it from someone who owned the machines?

Yes, I think they owned the machines, but they were old and we had to replace them right away.

And where do you buy them? Is there a place you just buy new machines?

Yes, there is.

There is?!

Oh yes!

When people win money, how does that work? I've been wondering. I know that when you win a lot of money, they come over and write it down.

Well, that's for the IRS.

Yeah, I'm talking about IRS.

That came much, much later, and the machines are so different now. They're made to make big winnings. Before it was not quite so big, and the IRS didn't get involved.

Were there a lot of people in the dining room and in the gambling part of it in that fifties and sixties period?

And seventies and eighties. Lots of them. We used to have at least four waitresses in the dining room, and a couple of cocktail waitresses and a couple of bus kids. We had very good business.

And then was there someone also who could manage so that your husband didn't have to work seven days and nights?

Yes. Well, he did it anyway, but we did have a manager.

Now how long did it continue where you had that whole complex of the Owl Casino-Restaurant-Motel? How long did the Hinmans keep that?

Well, we had it for twenty-five years and we sold in 1982.

And was that because it was getting too much...

We were very anxious to get out because it's just too much work. And the pressures! And the help. The big thing that helped us, when we got a manager he learned to do everything, and the Mexicans coming—the wetbacks—coming. At that time they did not need a green card, and they were very anxious to work, to make money, and most of the time they just wanted to make money. And they helped us tremendously.

Oh, they were reliable and good workers?

good.

I see. And did that stop when they needed the green cards? Was it harder and harder?

That came after we left.

Oh, okay, so you didn't have to deal with that.

No.

So then by 1982, what were the changes occurring in Battle Mountain?

Well before 1982, I would say around 1979 or 1980, the freeway went around us. And of course we noticed that. That was one of the changes. During the good times, there was a lot of barite here. This is the barite capital of the world, and that's when the time were really good, in the late seventies and eighties.

Then I read when China started to send over the barite, it hurt the business here? Is that what happened?

Uh-huh. And for a while they just closed some of these mines—laid the people off. And

of course we noticed that, but that place was still a very good place.

Well, before the freeway bypassed the town, was there lots of traffic coming through?

Yes. In the middle of June, schools ended in California: first there would be one batch about the fifth or sixth of June: and the next about a week later. We had to put on three times the help on the graveyard shift, because it was a big influx of people—just bin.

So was there also some relief when the freeway went around the town, because wouldn't it be pretty noisy and crowded with all the trucks coming right through your main street?

Well, I didn't really notice a difference. There had to be, but I didn't notice it.

Was there a controversy when it was going to be built? Was it a kind of a mixture of some relief for those who weren't businesspeople and others? Was there a battle about the freeway?

Well, nobody in business wanted to see it, but we knew it was going to go through. The big battle came, that most people on [Front] Street didn't want the third exit, which would have been the one that's coming in 1994, down close to 80.

Oh, there's going to be another exit?

There's going to be another exit.

Why didn't they want that?

Well, I guess I just really don't know. They didn't want it. And my husband is one that didn't want it.

Oh, okay. So then after you sold your business, where were your daughters?

We had one daughter that went the last two years of her school in Belmont, California, to high school.

Why?

Well, I just wanted to send her away for a little bit of change, and she went, and that was quite customary here at that time.

Who did she stay with?

She stayed right at the school.

Oh, they had a boarding school.

Uh-huh, boarding school.

I see. Did she want to go?

After she went she liked it, but at first she didn't.

What was she, about fifteen, sixteen?

Sixteen. And she had an aunt very close, and so I think it really has helped her, because she's very close to the aunt yet. She had a lot of friends that went to the school. And the other daughter stayed here. Then the older girl went to college for a couple of years.

Where?

In Reno.

Where did you say she went in California?

Belmont.

Was this a private high school?

Yes, a Catholic school.

Now, your younger daughter didn't want to go?

No, she didn't.

Is she the one who's more independent or more strong-minded?

Uh-huh.

And so she finished high school here?

She didn't finish high school.

Oh, she didn't finish high school: she's the strong-minded one.

She got married, and she's still married to the same one.

And she said, "Mama, you married young!" How old was she when she married?

About seventeen.

Same thing. But was her husband a local boy?

Yes, he was.

How did you feel when she was doing all that?

Well, I thought she was much too young, but he is a very nice boy.

And where do they live?

They live in Reno.

So now when you sold the Owl Club, your girls were gone?

They were gone.

Did you finally find time to have a little relaxation together?

Well, we traveled quite a lot during the last ten years in the Owl—traveled a lot.

How could you get away? Did you have a good manager?

Well, we had a good manager. We had some good personnel there, very good. Our help stayed a long time.

Good. And when did you start redoing this gorgeous home?

Well, actually, I did a little all the time. But I built the addition on six years ago. We didn't have an extra bathroom. We had an extra bathroom there, but it was through the kitchen. And then all this papering and everything was done six years ago. About thirty years ago, we added the family room onto the kitchen, so that's not new. And actually, what we've done the most of is paint and paper.

And that's more recent. You said some six years ago?

This six years ago, and that six years ago.

When you say "that" on tape, they won't know what you're referring to.

The living room.

And "this" is the dining room.

Yeah, this is the dining room.

So you had, over a space of time, kind of an enjoyment of.

Oh, yes.

Yes, it's beautiful. I'm going to back up a little bit to learn a little more about you. You're apparently very artistic. You have a very creative eye. Did you get into any activities that you liked outside of all the work that you did? Were there any special things that you liked to get into? Anything in art? or anything in an organization? or anything in friendships outside of your home?

Well, you know, as you have children in school, you go to PTA, you go to the band club. And then I always belonged to the Altar Society.

Now what does the Altar Society do?

Well, they help, for one thing, make money for the church. They clean the church, and that's mainly what they do.

What kind of fund raisers?

We've always had a St. Patrick's dance, until recently. Now they have a St. Patrick's raffle. They fill a cedar chest full of things and raffle that off. It's very lucrative. And then I used to go to Senior Citizens, on the council, but I didn't go there to eat, because we always ate at home.

As you began to be freer, did you do your shopping for clothes away from Battle Mountain? Where would you do your shopping?

I always went to Elko and bought my clothes, or Winnemucca or Reno. But I didn't go specifically for that, I would just be there and look around.

Tie things in, in a day trip?

Uh-huh.

Now tell me about the health and hospital situation in Battle Mountain, going back to when you had your daughters. Where were they born?

They were both born here.

In the Battle Mountain Hospital?

Both in the same hospital. And it's not a hospital now, it's an apartment house. But one was delivered by Dr. Clark who had delivered, I'm sure, my youngest sister. And then the other one was delivered by a doctor after Dr. Clark. I've forgotten his name. It was just a little hospital. We stayed in bed ten days! [chuckles]

Now tell me, in those days, if there were emergencies, did you have a place to always go for medical care?

Yes. My sister had an appendectomy and I remember she was not married, she still lived at home—she went to Elko.

Why?

They didn't do operating here. They didn't operate here.

They didn't have surgery or surgeons?

No surgery.

Let's say if you were giving birth and needed a Caesarean operation, what would happen?

I suppose they'd take you in an ambulance to—Winnemucca always had a surgeon and Elko had more than one, usually.

Okay, then when was the hospital that's here now, when was that built? Do you know much about the hospital?

I don't remember when it was built.

How is the health care here now?

I think it's pretty good. They do not deliver babies.

Why?

They say that the hospital is not equipped to deliver babies.

The hospital is not equipped?! Why don't they equip it?

Really, I don't know. For one thing, there's no surgeon.

Why can't they bring a surgeon here?

Well, it's just hard enough to get ordinary doctors here.

Oh. So no one's babies are born here any more?

No, they go to Winnemucca or Elko.

And if they need surgery they go somewhere else? What about surgery like cataract or something like that?

Nothing is done here.

Nothing! Are they working on improving that situation, now that it's a town of a good size?

Well, they're talking about building onto the hospital or building a new one, but I don't know what the outcome will be, because they need doctors all over. Elko is short about fifteen doctors, they say.

Really?! Are there any of the young people in this region that have a goal of becoming a doctor

to come home and help their community? Has there ever been any talk about that? Getting scholarships together?

One boy did go—I don't know him, but I think he went to Reno, and I think he's doing his internship. But what they are supposed to do when they get these scholarships is come back to these small communities for a while.

Yes, that's what I was wondering.

But I don't know if he'll come here or not.

I see. And I understand there's a pretty good clinic. What do they handle in the clinic attached to the hospital? Someone said there is a good clinic, a couple of doctors.

It's pretty good. It's a nice clinic, we have two nice doctors. I'm sure they're worked to death. But I think if you get anything very serious or they don't know what it is, they send you somewhere. I'm sure they do, to a specialist.

Uh-huh, in another city. But then that raises the health costs so much.

Uh-huh.

What do you think the future of the health care here is going to be? Do you see like five years down the road there will be their own health care where they don't have to depend on Elko and Winnemucca?

No, I don't see that. In fact, I think it's pretty hard to keep the doctors we have now. They're both very tired most of the time, and their wives—I don't know about these doctors—but women don't like to come to these small towns.

Oh, I see what you mean.

They don't even like to go to Elko. That's why they can't keep doctors.

Oh, they come and then they leave?

Uh-huh.

Now, moving to another area I know that the courthouse in Austin, which is a beautiful historic building, for many years that was the county seat of Lander County, Nevada, and that in 1980 the county seat, through a vote, was moved here to Battle Mountain. Can you tell me, before the vote, what the feeling was here about traveling to Austin for county business?

Well, for so many years, we just traveled there, and we always thought how convenient it would be if we could have it here. Like if you were subpoenaed on a jury, you'd have to go there, and maybe they didn't select you, and maybe part of your party was selected, and you just stayed until the end, and it was a long day and a long ninety miles. And we had so much business around Battle Mountain, and they had so little business, that it was always in our minds, "I wish we could get it in Battle Mountain." I think they tried two or three times and didn't make it, and eventually when the vote came in, we did make it. And it's very satisfactory because we have so many qualified people here who can do the job. Austin has fewer people, and I'm sure they were qualified, but I think they just stayed on and on and on with jobs.

There's just a three hundred fifty population now in Austin.

Uh-huh.

Before the vote, was there lobbying or petitions or anything before the vote was taken?

I'm sure there must have been a petition, I can't remember, to put it on the ballot. I'm sure there was.

From the opposition, was there active opposition? Was the opposition felt here? and if so, how?

I think some of the Austin people were vent unhappy with us, and we, in our business, had quite a few Austin people come down here for things, and they were always nice with us. But they say that they were very bitter. I didn't discuss it with anybody, but I understand that they still are bitter, but we always got along well with the Austin people. But we were very much in favor of it being moved.

Now, when it was moved, and since it was moved, has there been more activity and more people coming here? I notice when I come to work in Battle Mountain and stay at the Holiday Inn Express, the motel has a lot of people who look like they are here to do business. Has it brought new people in who weren't staying here before the county seat was moved here?

I know when they have a jury trial or a trial, the town, I think is much more active.

And also the Commissioners' Meetings?

The Commissioners' Meetings are getting longer and longer, and I'm sure if they had to go to Austin, they would have to stay there at least overnight. And I think this has helped them a lot. However, Mr. Williams [Ray Williams, Chairman, Board of Commissioners, who lives in Austin] does probably have to stay

overnight, I'm not sure. He may go back and forth. Or they just may work real late and then he goes back.

And then I noticed when I sat in on a few Commissioners' meetings like the business on maybe a new jail or things like that, the engineers and the architects stay over.

Uh-huh, I imagine they do stay over.

Have there been new people coming in to take jobs at the county courthouse, or are they residents here?

It's amazing, but we have real good individuals at the courthouse, but they are local.

Wonderful.

And they're young, and they seem to be doing a good job.

One of the things that impresses me, because I'm over there a lot, in my little office there, I see these young, energetic, intelligent women.

Right.

Now do some of them come with miners or ranchers, or are most of them ones who were born here, like it would be your daughters? Do you know?

Now I do know the county assessor was born here. I think her help probably came in with miners. And then we have the county recorder who came in with Battle Mountain Gold—her husband did. And the county treasurer was not born here, but she came here with her husband for a job, I would say. So I would say 75 percent came here to work.

Now, when the miners come to work in a big mine that might stay here a while, do some of them then buy a house and settle here?

I think most of them buy a home now. And I know a lot of people that came for—the original Battle Mountain Gold was called Duval Mine—and I know a lot of those people to me seem like they were natives, they've been here so long.

How has the population changed? Do you know what the population is here now, approximately?

I read the other day that it was 6,400, and I would say it is at least that. When we took the Owl Club thirty-five years ago, the population was between 1,200-1,500. And then it got up to be about 4,000 or something like that. Then it went with Echo Bay [Gold Mine] and all these new finds—it's about 6,400-7,000 now.

That's tremendous growth.

It is!

First, just from your life and your observation—let's say projecting ten years, what do you envision Battle Mountain to be like? Do you think there'll always be some mining going on and ranching?

I think there'll always be some mining and ranching, yes, I really do. And I think it may go back to 5,000, but I think it will always stay a pretty big town.

Now before we end, is there anything else about Lander County that might be helpful to people wanting to learn about this region that we have not covered?

Lander County?

Yeah, it doesn't have to just be Battle Mountain—we're covering all of Lander County.

Oh, I can't think of anything.

Do you think we've about covered it?

I think so.

Well then on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for giving us the time to share your information and your experiences with us.

You're welcome.

This is the end of the interview.

CARMEN HINMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS



CLINTON (BUTCH) AND CARMEN HINMAN, APRIL 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



50th Wedding Anniversary, Dec. 30, 1946. Mr. and Mrs. Ramon Oyarbide, with all the family, including daughters Mary Marvel and Carmen Hinman.

(Original photograph owned by family)



Mr. and Mrs. Ramon Oyarbide, parents of Mary Marvel and Carmen Hinman. 50th Wedding Anniversary, Dec. 30, 1946.

(Original photograph owned by family)

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First In A Series...

Homes Hold Intriguing Local History

By Debi Drown

With thought and feeling, the magnificent old homes in Battle Mountain hold history in their halls. The sounds of laughter, the tears of life, and all the other emotions of people have been felt by the many houses who have a story to tell through those who have bought them and adopted them as a part into their lives.

Driving through Battle Mountain, one may stop at the Owl Club for a bite to eat. Glancing outside through the picture windows attention is drawn to an impressive large two-story home across the way and adjacent to the Lion's Club Park.

Walking closer, the sight of an old coal car parked right outside the house catches the eye as well as the huge apple tree to the left. This has been the home of Carmen and Butch Hinman for the past 42 years.

In 1918 this home was built as a boarding house, owned and operated by Mrs. Lela Dusang. Her husband Joe passed away, leaving Mrs. Dusang a widow and the house provided her an income to help her with expenses.

As you first enter the home there is an inside porch where those of many years ago would hang their hats, hang their coats and remove their overshoes, a courtesy quite common before the invention of the vacuum cleaner.

As we enter the front door beveled glass allows us a peek through to the entry. Another

entry door with beveled glass greets you, as if to say, "come into my warm and caring rooms and halls." Upon entering you are met by a gorgeous stairway, the type with spindle decorative braces. As those who boarded here, followed the stairs upward, they found four bedrooms and a bath.

Through the years the Hinmans have reverently held onto many of the original furnishings. Mrs. Dusang's bed and some of her bedroom furnishings give a feeling of peace and simplicity, as well as a sigh of relief that they still remain home and area cared for as well as appreciated.

As we descend we walk through the hall into the dining room where Dusang served her boarding guests their meals. To the right of the dining room, which is still maintained in its timeless elegance, is a small room with windows surrounding two of the sides. Carmen explained that this was known as the "conservatory" and was filled with plants of all kinds.

Carmen can remember this house from childhood when her mother sent her to check to see if Dusang was in need of anything, as well as to deliver eggs. Dusang was an older woman who made the beds of her boarders as well as prepared

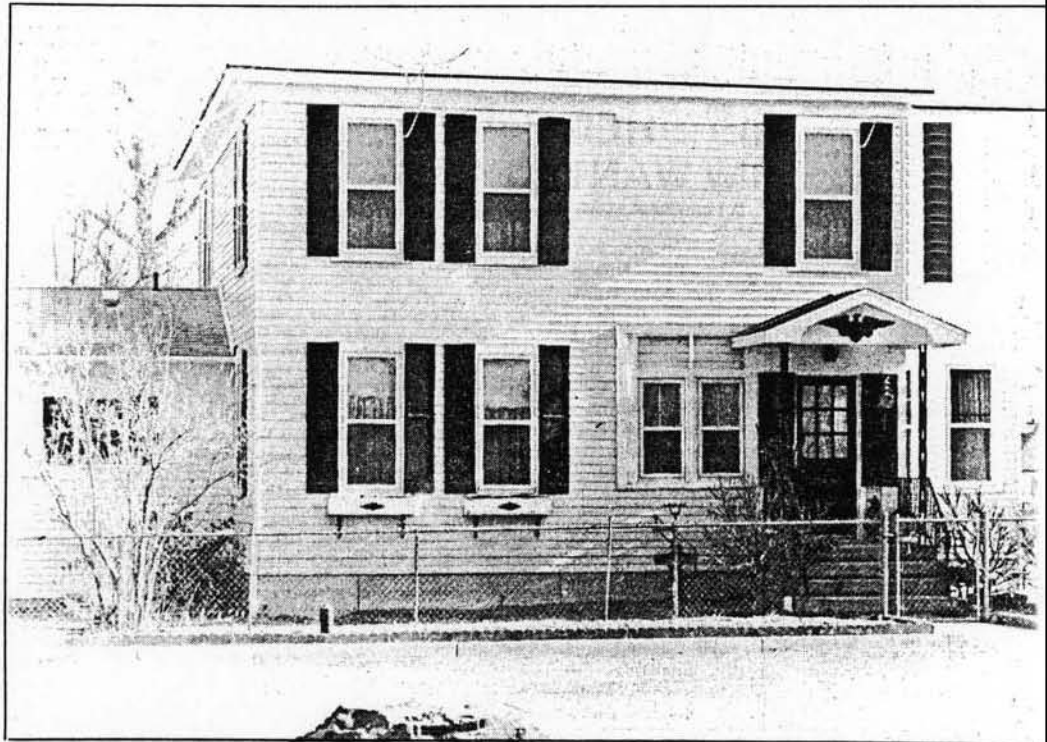
their meals.

Downstairs as you leave the dining room, there is the kitchen where the meals were prepared and a few more steps brings you to Dusang's small bedroom now converted into a bathroom. It was just large enough to hold a bed and perhaps a chiffonier.

Walking out of the kitchen and through the entry to the dining room, brings us to the parlor. A pump organ as well as an er table and told down desk are still set in their original home.

Carmen remembers as a child that the room was very dark with dark heavy drapes separating the parlor from the living room.

The Hinman's have added and remodeled and done a beautiful job of continuing the history of Battle Mountain in their home. Mrs. Dusang would be so proud



CARMEN HINMAN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, they have been reformatted, a process that was completed in early 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

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CLINTON GEORGE “BUTCH” HINMAN

PREFACE

Clinton George Hinman’s maternal grandfather, Samuel Holman, was born near a tin mine in England and migrated to the United States, traveling directly to Austin, Nevada to work in the thriving silver mines. There Samuel met and married a young woman who was born in Austin. Their daughter, Florence Bessie Holman, was also born in Austin. Years later she married George A. Hinman, whose grandmother was an Altenburg, the family who built and managed the Nevada Hotel in Battle Mountain, where George Hinman was born.

George and Florence Hinman’s son, Clinton, was the third generation to be born in Austin. His parents moved to Battle Mountain when he was a year old, and most of his long life has been spent in that region.

Clinton Hinman is called “Butch” by everyone who knows him, a nickname given to him by his classmates because his grandfather and father ran a butcher shop. George Hinman’s stepfather, Charles Birkins,

had a meat market in Battle Mountain, and when he died, George managed it. Butch was about eight years old when he started helping his father in the meat market after school and holidays. By the time he was ten, he was grinding meat for hamburger. This experience had an impact on his determination to work for himself rather than work for someone else, since he observed the financial success of his father, and decided that was a good way of life.

Butch tells of starting in the mines with his grandfather, working in various mines from the time he was eighteen. Prospecting was always a way of life for him, too. A man of vision and energy, he also started a cattle ranch with thirty-three steers, eventually owning a thousand head of cattle. The money from the sale of the cattle helped him to start the Owl Club in the 1950s, gradually including a gambling casino, bar, restaurant and motel. His wife Carmen worked with him to develop one of the major businesses in town, employing hundreds of people over the years. Butch often worked eighteen-hour

days, and finally sold the Owl Club in 1982 so he and Carmen could have a more leisurely life together.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Butch Hinman at his home, at 685 North First Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on April 17, 1993.

Good morning, Butch. I'm happy to be here to interview you this morning. Could you tell me your full name, spelling your first and last name.

Butch Hinman: Okay, Clinton George Hinman.

Where did you get the nickname "Butch"?

Well, when I was a small kid, [I was just about in the first or second grade], we were having a little scrap and somebody started calling me "Butch," but really I think it come from my father, because my father was a meat cutter.

Oh, that's very interesting!

But that's where it started.

Could you tell us where and when you were born?

I was born September 13, 1916, in Austin, Nevada, on top of Virginia Hill.

Oh my, so you're a Nevadan, born here.

Born here.

Now I want to go back to your grandparents. Can you tell me first is Samuel Holman your father's father?

No that's my mother's father.

Would you tell us where and when Samuel Holman was born?

Samuel Holman was born in Truro, Cornwall, England. That's over there where the Cousin Jacks are.* He was born right by the tin mine that goes out under the ocean there. And we've been over to see where he lived and met his sister.

Now, tell me when did your grandfather come to the United States? Do you know that?

I don't remember that, but he came and went directly to Austin, went to work in the mine, and made about \$1,300 about the first week or two he was in there. I think that was the last money he ever made working for himself.

This is what I need to know: how did he know about Austin? What brought him to Austin, Nevada?

Austin was a big mining camp. At that time it was one of the biggest mound.

Did they advertise in England for workers?

*"Cousin Jacks" is slang for English people, especially from Cornwall. When the men first came to the U.S. to work in the mines here, they would all tell their superintendent that if they needed more help, they could write to their cousin Jack in Truro or some other town in Cornwall.

I really don't know. I don't know how he come out.

Do you know how old he was when he came to Austin?

No, I don't. I don't know, I just never did talk to him that much, although I worked with him out in the mines. He taught me how to single-jack and double-jack.

Oh! Now, did he live in Austin the rest of his life?

No, he married my grandmother.

Where did he meet her?

In Austin.

And what was her name?

Her name was Turvathen.

When they married, do you know how old they were?

No, I don't. But my mother was the first child born. I don't know the exact sequence of this, but he went to Alaska to the gold rush and he worked up there.

Was that before he got married?

No, that was after he was married. And he sent the money back.

I see. Was your grandmother born in this country?

She was born in Austin.

She was born in Austin! Do you know where her family came from?

I don't know. That was too old. But her mother was there.

And then you were born in Austin as well. Were you the first child?

I was the only child.

Now you said your grandfather went to the Yukon. Did he go with a group?

No, I think he went by himself, although some Turvathens also went up there from Austin, and they come back with money and they went down to Fresno and bought ranches and that.

Now how long did your grandfather stay up in Alaska?

I don't know just how long he stayed, but I've been up where the mine was.

Oh you have?!

Yes.

Then tell me, from your very earliest memories in Austin, what it was like then.

Well Austin seemed to me like it had more people in it, and more businesses up and down the street. And they were just changing from—as I remember—bringing the people from the narrow gauge railroad, which is in the bottom part of the town, up, and a fellow by the name of Unc Frances bought a new car and the people that had the wagons, the Kings, why, they threw horse manure on the car because he was taking their trade from bringing it up the hill.

How long did you and your family live in Austin?

Well, I was only there about a year the first time, and then my father went to San Francisco. He had been an engineer on the narrow gauge, going from Battle Mountain to Austin, and they were short of engineers, so they got him to go down to San Francisco, and he was an engineer there. Then he got transferred down to Arizona. We went to San Francisco and we were living there. Now this is what my mother told me, that my dad was gone all night, and she didn't like it. And when he got transferred down to Arizona, well, he didn't like the idea of all the people with TB being transported to Arizona, so he decided to quit. He got a job with the railroad up in Carlin as a mechanic up there in the shops, and he'd be home with my mother all the time.

Were you a baby then?

I was a baby, yeah.

So he went to Carlin and you were a baby, and then where did you live after that?

When I was about five years old, my step-grandfather, by the name of Birkins, died.

Your step-grandfather? Who was that?

Yes, my grandfather had died and my grandmother had married this Birkins and he was the meat cutter.

You're talking now on your father's side?

On my father's side now. This is because we moved from Carlin to Battle Mountain, and my father came down in a pair of railroad bib overalls and worked in the meat market for ten years [laughs] and helped his mother out.

I see, your father was born in Battle Mountain.

Yes, in the Nevada Hotel.

Oh, for goodness sakes! So then did you live the rest of the time in Battle Mountain?

Yes, we lived here and I went to grammar school, high school, and attended the University of Nevada for two-and-a-half years.

At Reno?

At Reno.

So you have a lot to tell us. How old were you when you moved to Battle Mountain?

I was about five years old.

So you have a long life here to share with us. Let's go all the way back to your earliest childhood. And tell me, as you can remember it, several things: Number one, let's start with your family and home life and house. What kind of a daily life did you live as a child?

We lived in my grandmother's house that she'd been living in. She moved out and she went over to live with a sister by the name of Treat.

Where was that? Was that here in Battle Mountain?

This was here in Battle Mountain. And we lived in her house, which was on the road that goes out to Copper Canyon, and now goes to Austin.

And your immediate family lived there? Your mother, father, and you?

No, just my mother and father lived there. Then my grandfather from Austin come down, but they got their own house until they got too old. My grandfather, being a miner all his life, he had the miners con and he died I think when he was about seventy-two. That's just a lung disease from too much rock [dust] on the lung.

I see, and did he live then with you?

Yes, him and my grandmother lived with us for a number of years.

Your mother cared for them?

My mother cared for them.

Now, tell me what the house was like. Did you have running water?

Well, when we first went there to live, we didn't have water in the house, but we had water that was piped across the street from the Altenburgs, which is part of the other family, and it run in a big tank. Then we had a spigot off it so that we could pack the water in the house, and we had a coal stove with a heater alongside that heated the water up.

Did you start helping with chores as you were getting a little bit bigger?

Yes, and I worked around the meat market, helping my father, sweep the floors and clean out the sawdust to get the dimes that fell down. [laughs]

*That started you in the gambling? [laughing]
Now tell me, how old were you when you started to help in your father's meat market?*

Well, I believe I was about maybe eight or ten, something like that, and I'd come down and help. My mother would come down, because we had about the only meat market in town, most of the time. Sometimes there were other meat markets, but they'd close down.

Where was that meat market?

It was right down in back, across the alley from the Owl Club.

Oh! Right in town here?

Yes, right in town.

And where did your father get the beef?

He got it from Cudahy in Salt Lake City, and then he got meat from Reno, mostly lunch meats and stuff like that.

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And where did your father get the beef?

He got it from Cudahy in Salt Lake City, and then he got meat from Reno, mostly lunch meats and stuff like that.

Would he have to get it? or would it be delivered?

It would be delivered. And they all remembered Birkins in Salt Lake City, even after I got running the meat market. I talked to a fellow there and he says, "Did you know Charlie Birkins?" And I said, "Yes." He said,

"He used to send in \$10,000 in gold and he'd tell us when that started running out, why, tell him and he'd send another bunch."

So as a child this would be probably after school or holidays, summers?

After school and on Saturdays. And then when I got about ten or eleven, then I was making hamburger, helping him grind it.

Did you enjoy that?

I guess I did.

It made you responsible.

Yes. I think it was the thing that changed me from wanting to work for somebody else, to be on my own, because my father got a nice house out of it. When I was down at the university, he built a new home, and he always gave all these old miners money to work on. He knew he'd never get it back. So I thought, "Well, that's a good life."

Now, tell me, back in those early years as you were eight and nine, tell me—that's before your grandparents lived with you, right?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about your mother in your home.

Well, my mother was a real fine cook, and she ate a lot of her cooking and she got pretty good-sized. [laughs]

Do you have pictures of your parents?

I do have some, yes.

You can show me after. And did she belong to any women's organizations in town? Or was she active socially?

Yeah, she was in Eastern Star.

Well, my father was a Mason and she was an Eastern Star ever since they started here.

Now let's also go back to when you started school. Tell me the earliest recollections and bring me through your grammar school.

Well, my first teacher was Eliza Pierce, and she'd also been teaching school when my father was going to school, but she never taught him.

Can you tell me a little about her, because I see her name everywhere: a school's named after her.

Well, she taught all that time and she was a good teacher and a good fisherman.

A fisherman?!

Yeah, her and her sister would always go fishing. She never got married.

A devoted teacher to her children?

Yeah, that's right.

Do you have any memories of your classrooms: How many children, what was it like, did you have recess?

Oh, yes, we had recess and then at the end of recess they rang the bell. Then you lined up and you marched in and they had music a-playing to march by, and they tried to get some kind of march music. And then every

once in a while, we'd have classical music as we went in the door.

Oh, that's very nice! About how many students were in the classroom? Was it a one-room schoolhouse at first?

No, it wasn't. The one-room schoolhouse was the Indian school in back, and that's the one my father attended.

Why, was he Indian?

No, there was no other school. That was the first school.

Oh, when he started, I see. Everyone went together then?

Yeah, and I think he went through school—I don't know how many years it was—but they wanted him to come and teach because he was a smart student. He was supporting his mother and his sister at that time, and he chose to be a wagon driver. He drove the teams and hauled ore and stuff like that.

As a young man?

A young man, yeah.

What made him decide, or what opportunities arose, for him to open a butcher shop?

We was up in Carlin, and his step-father died and he come down to Battle Mountain to help his mother out. And he was always going back to railroading, so he wore his striped bib overalls for about ten years before he [laughs] changed to regular pants to work in the butcher shop.

Now, going again back to your youth: about how many were in your classroom?

Well I imagine there must have been around fifteen, sixteen. That's how many got to high school with us, I remember.

Well back in elementary school, was this a period of mining activity?

We always had mining activities in Battle Mountain, and practically everybody living here was connected with mining in one way or the other. There was a few ranches, and a big ranch, the Marvel Ranch they called the Jenkins Ranch. Then there was a few smaller ones along the Humboldt here.

Now, because of the influx of people to work in the mines, was there an ethnic diversity, different kinds of children in the classroom? Were there Mexicans? Were there any blacks?

Yes, there was one black And that was a girl in our class, and then they had a family of about three girls and just one boy, I believe, that family. And they all went to school, but most of them were older than I was except the one girl and she was in our class.

Were they here for the mines, or the railroad?

He was here as an assayer, I think. He helped with the assaying someplace. Then he moved down to work for the railroads when that mine went busted or whatever happened to it.

Now I notice in town there are a lot of Spanish-speaking people. Were there people from Mexico working up here and in your classroom?

Now and then there was people working on the railroad. Most of all the Mexicans that come in, worked for the railroads in that day.

I see. Did they attend the same classrooms?

Same classrooms.

Did they speak English?

Yes, they always spoke English, the ones I knew. And I guess when they started school, they probably couldn't, but in a few days they could.

Did they come up from Mexico, or were they already in parts of Nevada or California?

I really don't know that part.

When you were going to school the Indians were in a separate school?

In a separate school, yes. And I believe their school was supported by the government.

Okay, just like the reservation. Was there a time when they integrated into the classroom with everyone?

Well, they did, but not while I was going to school. While I was going to school, they did have one Indian boy that was real smart. He could write real well, so they'd have him write all these papers and they'd take the papers around the state to show the whole state his writing.

That's interesting. Now, back to your childhood: did you have a lot of friends? did you have time for play and fun?

Oh, yes, I always had plenty of time, in fact I played more than I worked.

Tell me a little about from the time you were eight until you were about eleven, before you were a teenager. What kind of things did the kids do for fun?

Well, we rode bicycles and we fished. When I first started going to school I started going down on the river fishing, and my folks were always after me [laughs] for going down too early, but we did fish all the time. That was the biggest part of our life.

What did you do in the winters?

In the winters, went skating on the river.

Oh, how interesting—ice skating!

It seemed like we used to have colder weather, or seemed like it anyway, because we always had skating, pretty near every year.

Oh, that sounds like fun. Now, you would be off in the summer from school?

Yes.

And so how were your summers spent?

Well, most of the time just playing or swimming. Just depends on if my father had a man to help him. If he didn't, then I'd go down and help him and my mother would go down and help him.

What was Battle Mountain like then, when you were growing up, compared to what it is now?

It only had about six or seven hundred people in it. And after the big mines come... Right now, I think there might be around five or six thousand people.

I was wondering what the population was. So back then, were the streets paved?

No, the streets weren't paved. And so we had the flood.

Now when was that?

In 1962. We had a druggist here, and so he got to be county commissioner, and after the floods he straightened out the streets and the people were so mad at him, they kicked him out of office.

They wanted it dirt roads, the way it was!

Dirt roads, yeah. [laughs] He done more for the county than any county commissioner we ever had, and they kicked him out and that really hurt him. And as soon as he could sell his business, he got out. That was the same drugstore they have now.

Tell me about in the early period, as you were growing up, about the health situation: were there doctors or nurses or clinics?

We didn't have any clinics, but we did have doctors. It just depends on the doctors themselves—and sometimes we had up to three here—but most of the time we had one by the name of Doc Clark and he delivered all the babies and he done everything. He was real good and he also developed treatments for the tick disease. He was an authority on it and he was quoted in a lot of journals and that.

Did he stay here most of his practicing years?

All of his practicing years.

Uh-huh, so that was no problem.

No, and he tried to get in the sheep business and whatnot [laughs] and he got his son all shot up over it.

What do you mean?

Well, his son went out and tried to run the Bascos [Basques] off and he had a little .22 and he started shooting at them and they had big rifles and they crippled his arm. He was always a cripple after that.

Why did he want to get the Basques away?

Well, you know, there's always a fight between the sheepmen and the cattlemen. And he wasn't much of a cattleman, but he wanted to be, and he was hot-tempered.

Is that because he didn't want the sheep to graze on the cattle lands?

Yes, that's right.

I see. Tell me also during your youth, what you can remember in Battle Mountain as to when the mining got very active and a lot of new people came in. When these children came to your classroom, did it take a while for them to adjust? were they accepted right away?

I think they was accepted because, really, there was no big mine come in at one time. They just kind of grew and grew, and a lot of it was placer mining and just people mining on their own. WPA come in, they couldn't hire

anybody in Battle Mountain hardly because everybody was placer mining, so they had to go to Elko and they brought in Indians and people out of Elko to do the work to put in the water towers.

I see, in other words, there wasn't enough unemployed people who were available to do that work?

That's right.

Now what is it that the WPA did in this region? No one has told me that.

Oh, they put in the water and the sewer and built the tank. That was the first water. Outside of that we had all artesian wells.

Oh, I didn't know about that.

Water some places would raise up that high out of the ground and they'd just pipe it into their house. In this house over here, that tall one right across the way, that went to the second floor!

Oh my! How long were the WPA people here doing that work?

I don't know, several years, I didn't pay any attention.

I know there are railroad tracks right through your town.

Yes.

And there was a time, I understand, when the trains stopped here and there was a depot. Tell me whatever you can about the railroad coming through Battle Mountain.

See, they started it down here and They put a station in here, but they couldn't find the water for it. So then they moved it back up to Argenta, because there's a pipeline that comes down the canyon and they used that. Well finally they found out right where they had the old station here, down about six feet there was water, so then they drilled a big well and [had] all the water they wanted. And so then they moved the town [station] back to Battle Mountain.

Was that in The 1860s?

Yeah. I don't know the exact date, because I've never seen it, but my grandmother and I guess grand-aunts, all of them, they had the Nevada Hotel up there. When the train would stop, they'd take their pies over and they'd sell their pies. And then every once in a while the cowboys would come along and they'd be riding broncos and they'd have a bucking contest right out for all the [train passengers]—putting on a show.

Now what time period is that?

That was right after the railroad was through.

Early, an early period?

Yeah.

What were their names? Your aunts and the ones who ran the hotel.

Mary Birkins and Treat.

Oh, the Treat you told me about.

Yeah. Then there were ail the Altenburgs.

Oh! Did they all get together and buy that hotel?

No, the Altenburgs built it.

So then the railroad came to Battle Mountain, and is that when Battle Mountain started to grow more?

Yes. And they'd found some mines out by Copper Basin and Copper Canyon. They were pretty good mines and they're still working. But they've turned to gold now. They've still got copper, but their deal with the government, they can't ship the copper because they took some kind of a write-off. So probably when they get out of it, somebody else will go back and mine copper.

Uh-huh. And I understand the depot was open here, where people could get on the train, and then it closed. What caused it to close?

Well, they closed them all up and down the line. They shipped out all the wool, and there was big, oh, big sacks of wool. And then they shipped out all the ore, and it went into Tooele, Utah, and the different smelters around. And it was copper ore mostly, and they shipped some gold ore and some lead ore.

Did they start shipping it then by trucks? Or what halted the use of the freight cars?

The smelters were shut down.

Oh, I see. But what about the wool?

The wool, why, I don't know what they do. They still shear some here, but not like they used to, because Jenkins Company had the biggest bands of sheep in the state.

And did that dwindle?

Yeah, they had to get rid of their sheep because, I don't know, it was too much, and the cost was too high.

I see. In that period when you were growing up, let's get you into high school now. Where was the school?

The school was right up where the hospital is now. It was a two-story high school. We had a gymnasium inside. We played basketball and track, but we didn't have any football team. I don't think we'd have had enough. They didn't have a sixth man in that day. So we just had basketball and track and tennis. And the tennis court was down where the grammar school was, which is the legal offices now, where they have the district attorney and that. [Courthouse] There used to be a grammar school and the Indian school both there.

Oh, the Indian school too. Now let's get to some of the classes that you took in high school.

Well I took, of course, English, and chemistry, and math, and I took all the math they gave, which was good. They had a good math course that took you up to calculus. But I didn't have calculus until I went to college. We had political science and I can't think of the rest of them right offhand.

That sounds like a really solid education.

It was. We had good teachers, and we had teachers that made sure that you did your Work. In order to play basketball, you had to. And they didn't help you, they made you do it.

How many were in your classrooms?

There was fourteen in ours, and the one before us only had four. They started with six, but they wound up with four.

It was a lot easier for teachers then, than now.

Yeah, I think there was only forty-two in the whole high school.

Oh my! What were your favorite subjects?

Math and chemistry. I took Spanish, I got through it, but that's about all! [laughs] And English, I wasn't very good in English.

Now as you were going through high school, did you begin to determine what you wanted to do in your adult life?

No, I didn't. My mother kind of wanted me to be an engineer, and I was never round engineering, and when I went to college I went for civil engineering. I didn't know what I was doing, so I really didn't do good enough, and then I come out and I went mining after two-and-a-half years of college.

Okay, let's get back to high school a little bit. Were you still helping in your father's butcher shop some of the time?

Yes, I'd work in there part of the time, and then during the summer sometimes I'd work for the mines. I delivered the mail to one mine, and was a driver for the boss, his chauffeur. And then one year I went up to Austin and I worked out in the hay fields. I'd never been around horses, but I worked in the hay fields and got good experience there, because I went on a wagon ride, covered wagon, and we had a lot of college girls from the family. And we took them up

through lone and all over the mountains for two weeks to give them a survey of the country.

Oh, that sounds interesting.

It was good for me, because I hadn't been all over there neither. So my uncle and my aunt and myself, we took the girls in a covered wagon. I rode a horse. And these were college girls and I was dry behind the ears—I was about fifteen, I think. [laughs]

That must have been fun. I read in some of the research I was doing that the Jenkins sheep ranches hired 85 percent of the high school boys. Did you work on their sheep ranch?

No, I never did.

You weren't one of them?

No, I wasn't one of them.

Then we'll get to graduation. You graduated high school. How did they celebrate graduation from high school?

You know, we went through the whole ceremony. And they had their valedictorian and that, which I wasn't part of, but they had all that, and salutatorian and all that. It was just a regular ceremony.

Now, what year did you graduate high school?

In 1935, I think.

So it was Depression time?

Yes.

How did that affect Battle Mountain?

Well, it affected it like everywhere else. And like us, my father was in the meat market, and just the day before the banks closed, he deposited all his money in there. He was ready to kill the banker for not telling him.

Oh my. So how did you make it through that period?

Well, we just made it. Finally we made enough money that we even helped the Nevada Hotel out. Then my father got in trouble because he wanted them to put it in writing, and they just wanted a loan without any writing, and so he says, "No, I want it in writing." So they got mad and paid him back!

Now, what was the relationship again between him and the people at the Nevada Hotel?

That was on his mother's side. She was an Altenburg.

Okay, now I got it. So in that period, did the mining slow down?

No, I think the mining kept right on a-going.

Someone said in an interview that under Roosevelt, the gold prices went up, and so that gave an impetus to more gold mining?

They went from twenty-two dollars an ounce up to thirty-five. And when we were mining, like myself and we'd ship a little ore or something like that, you wouldn't get thirty-five, you'd get about, oh, maybe thirty-two or something like that for it.

Did you start in the mines then?

Yes, I started in the mines with my grandfather. And then my dad was always grubstaking somebody. So I went out and worked and we'd ship a little ore but we never made enough to break even.

What does "grubstaking" mean?, for those that might not know.

Grubstaking means that one fellow pays all expenses and the other one does all the labor.

And you split the profits?

Then you split the profits.

Someone asked me, and I couldn't tell them: What does it mean to "stake a claim"?

To stake a claim, in this state is 1,500 [feet] by 750 feet. That's the size of it. So you go out and you put your stakes up on each corner, and then you put a location stake—and it don't have to be in the center, it can be anyplace there—and then in order to finish staking the claim, you got to dig a hole so big. I don't know what it is now, but at that time it was just a small hole like ten by six feet or something like that. Then you record it at the county office, and the claim belonged to you. But you had to do a hundred dollars' worth of work a year to keep it.

Now, was land designated where you could do this that was public lands?

It was all public land except close to the railroads, which they got every other section.

Did your family stake claims?

[laughs] My dad staked so many claims that a sheepherder told him one time, "George, I've herded sheep in three states and I haven't been off of your ground yet!" [laughs]

So there was no limit?

There was no limit.

As long as you followed those regulations?

That's right.

I see. Even if you didn't find anything.

If you didn't find anything, why, usually you turned it loose. But if you had a little inkling, why, you could keep it as long as you did the work. You really didn't have to do a hundred dollars' worth of work, because nobody ever checked it. It might come to court, but most of the time nobody—as long as you went out there and looked it over, why, that was your claim.

Did you have to pay taxes on that?

No, you didn't. You had to do the work, a hundred dollars' worth of work a year.

That's interesting. You're the first one that explained that thoroughly. Now, you said you went to work in the mines. How old were you then?

Well, this was just in the summertime I started, in the summers.

How old when you started?

Well, when I worked for the Gray Eagle Mine out there, I was about eighteen, I think—eighteen or nineteen.

And what did you do?

Well, when I was out there, I was a driver of the car, and I hauled the mail out, and I chauffeured the boss all around the hills out there, and then even down to Reno a couple of times.

How far is Gray Eagle from Battle Mountain?

It is about, I would say, about twenty-five miles.

So you did that one whole summer?

One whole summer, yes. And not only that, another fellow and I hauled Hilltop over to Gray Eagle. Well, you'll be seeing Bruce Swackhamer—that's where he lived.

I interviewed Paul Christopher yesterday, and his father owned part of that.

That's right, and we moved all their houses and that over to Gray Eagle for the mining company on a big flatbed Ford truck that had just a small motor in it, but a tremendous truck. It had real low gears, and it wasn't for this country at all, because you had to back mound and turns and all that.

And you were able to do that?

Well, another fellow and I did. They didn't have anybody else. And it would fall

apart—the front wheels would come off and we'd have to get U-screws to put them on. And it was a brand new truck, but it wasn't built for this country.

Oh my! Did you ever work directly in the mines?

Just for myself—I never worked for anybody else.

Tell me what you did and when you first started to do mining for yourself and where. About how old were you?

Well, I was in high school and I'd come out and work with my grandfather. That's whet, I learned to single-jack and double-jack.

And where was that?

That was in Iron Canyon. Then I worked over in Alder Creek. They started that the first year that Franklin Roosevelt went into office and finished the tunnel the last year he was in office.

So you were mining there. Tell me a little more in detail what you did.

Well, I went in there and we worked in the mine.

Was that underground?

That's underground. We got in there over five hundred feet and drifted. I wasn't a big miner there, I just went in and worked when we drilled and drove the tunnel—helped drive it.

When you say "helped drive the tunnel," is that moving the ore?

That was, you'd get up there and single-jack on the face of the tunnel, then you'd put in a round and you'd blast out. You'd make, oh, maybe three feet or something like that—it depends on the rock. And then you'd muck it into a car and you'd haul it up and dump it over the dump.

I see. Did it hurt your lungs? I understand a lot of miners lungs were damaged.

No, this happened to be softer ground and it didn't bother my lungs, and I didn't work in there that much, you know.

We're talking now, what, around the thirties?

Yeah, in the thirties.

What were the conditions for the miners in that period in this region?

Well, in some places, like in Hilltop and around there, they had hard rock and anybody that worked in the mine a good part of their life, died with miner's con, which is rock on the lungs.

Oh, my! Did they know it? or was it before you knew the danger?

Well, a lot of them didn't know it, and then sometimes the men didn't know it, but I think the bosses did. But they'd start using the jackhammers, and they didn't use water with them, and sometimes they'd only last a few months.

Oh, my?

So then they put in regulations where they had to use water underneath the ground.

Who put in the regulations?

I don't know if it was the state or the [federal] government—I don't know.

Not the owners?

Not the owners, no.

Were there unions for the workers at that time for the miners?

No union was around here, no, none at all. But we had a state inspector, and that's about as far as it went, and he sat in his office and never got out.

So how long did you continue working in the mines?

Well, I did pretty near all my life do a little work. And I was always prospecting, until right now!

Really?! Tell me where you prospect and what you find.

Well, I prospected. The second one I only made a little money on, I've done some at Alder Creek and I made a little money.

Did you stake a claim there?

Yes, that was beside what my father had. And the Union Pacific come along—the same one they got now that's got all the mines—I didn't know they were a mining company, but they come and paid me to look at my claim. They gave me \$2,500 to

look at my claim. So I said, that's fine with me!

Why did they do that?

They wanted to assay it and see what I was working on. So they told me they didn't want it, but they gave me the money.

Did they buy it from you?

No, they just give me the money for letting them go and look over my ground.

Oh, I see, they looked over your ground. And where is that located?

Alder Creek.

Oh, at Alder Creek. I see. So over the years, kind of like a hobby and side thing you've done this in your spare time?

Yes. We look for barite. And all the time I was in the Army I dreamed of finding a lot of barite. When I got back, I never did find that lot. [laughs]

I'm curious, let's go back to when you finished college. So tell me from that point what you did with your life.

Well, when I come back, I went working in the mines again, and I went down and I worked some in the butcher shop. Then I started relieving my father in there so he could take a little time off, and I worked in the butcher shop.

Did he do mining and prospecting?

Oh, yes, right up to the day, just about, he died. A week before he died he carried a tie*

on his shoulder—he was about eighty years old—and he carried a tie on his shoulder up and located a claim. But he had skin cancer. It was up in his head. In those days, they didn't know how to cure it. They burned it with acid and then with lye and really tortured him.

So you were in the butcher shop and you were mining.

And then when I was about, I think, oh, about twenty-two, I was drafted into the Army.

Where did you go?

I went to Camp Roberts, then down to San Luis Obispo, and then I went from there to Salt Lake City to Fort Douglas. And by that time the war had started, but I was always going to get out in, I think, twelve or thirteen months or something when I went in, but then I was in for the duration because when I was down at California there, why, the war broke out and so we was in for the duration.

Did you have to go overseas?

Yes, I went over.

Where did you go?

I went to Hawaii and trained over there. Overseas, yes, that was the first place, Hawaii, and then from there over to Saipan in the Pacific in the Marianas.

Did you get out of it okay without any damage?

*Wooden support for the rails of a railroad track, about six feet long.

Yeah.

How did it feel for a boy from Battle Mountain, going to all these places?

Well, I tell you, I didn't know what the Army was! When I got in, I'd hardly ever seen a soldier or sailor, you know, out here.

How did you feel about it?

Well, I didn't know. I thought I didn't know what the hell I was getting into, but as long as everybody was going, I was going.

So you came home safely?

I come home safely in four-and-a-half years.

And how were your parents by then?

Fine. My father was out of the meat market—he'd leased that out because he was getting kind of old. And so when I come back, he asked me if I wanted to go in that, and I said, "No, I think I want to do something else." So I went mining again, and we made enough money to get along. We didn't make anything big.

Who did you mine with?

Tony "Boots" Nadern.

Was he a Battle Mountain man?

He was a Battle Mountain man. He had a wife and a couple of girls here.

How old were you then?

Let's see, around twenty-six, something like that.

So then were you living in your family's home?

Living in my family's home. I paid them board and that's all I paid them. With Tony Boots, see, we come back and there was a bonus on copper.

A bonus from the government?

From the government.

They needed that?

Yes. So we was able to make pretty good money. And when they took the bonus off, well then that put us out of work. So then I started in construction work down in Winnemucca, and I worked there for about a year with my uncle down there. But I wasn't a carpenter. I could do all the heavy work and that, and he wanted me to help him build a house, and I told him no, I wasn't good enough to do that. And so I told him he'd better go ahead and do it himself I said, "I'll give you all our equipment." By that time we'd bought a truck and that, and I just gave him all the equipment and helped him out.

You lived in Winnemucca that year?

Yes, and then I come back up here. A fellow was working in the butcher shop by the name of Gordon Estes and he was working in my father's shop. But he went deer hunting and fell off a cliff and got hurt, so they come and got me to go down and work until he got better. And he come down and then he wanted me to go in partners, and we went in partners.

I see, so your father was already out of it and had sold it to Estes?

He wanted to lease it and Gordon didn't want to take it by himself. He said he didn't have any money, and so I had a little money and I said, "Well, I'll go with you then." And we went in the meat market business. And then in a few years we bought out a grocery store.

You were right there, near where the Owl is?

Yes. And the grocery store is part of the Owl now—where the Mendive Hotel was there. And we went in there.

Was there kind of a boom in Battle Mountain right after the war?

I think there was. They were building the airport out here, and that's what was going on that I know. And there was probably a little mining.

So your business was doing good?

Oh, real good, yeah.

And you expanded into what? into a grocery store?

A grocery store. And then in a few years, we moved the meat market over into the grocery store and we had it all under one roof. And then my partner, he wanted to get out, so I bought him out.

Oh, I see. Were you still single?

Yes. But when we bought him out, I was married by that time.

I see, okay. Was Swackhamer's store still in town?

Yeah, Swackhamer's was down on the corner of the Owl Club, and that used to be Horton's store. That's part of the Owl Club now. And Swackhamer's come across the street. I don't know what's in there now, it used to be a flower shop. And they started a store and they put hardware in the back and where Horton used to sell coal and they had a hardware in there. Because Horton's used to have a place that they sold a little hardware and they sold groceries and in the early days, they had a little bank in there too.

Oh for goodness sakes! So everybody was doing well then?

Yeah.

So you then owned this yourself—you bought out.

We bought out Gordon and we leased the building, because that was the Mendive Building. We bought out Pete Mendive, and he went to Las Vegas, and Henderson then went to work. So we kept his place—we leased it from his mother—and we stayed there I don't know just how many years, but we did fine. We took some nice trips and that. And then we decided to get out and I was going out here ranching.

Did you sell out your stores?

Yeah, I sold out the store, but first I'd raised some cattle out there. A friend of mine, we kind of went partners on the gambling and the Owl Club. He didn't have any money to go, and so I put up the money and he'd come

in every few days and he'd say, "Here's a little money we made last night." I never did keep track of it.

Let me back up a little bit: Now tell me about the Owl Club.

Well, the Owl Club was run by Frank Eaton and Sam Ballin. They were partners, and they had the best house in town—they done the most business.

That was gambling, like it is now?

Gambling, yes. So things got slow on the Twenty-one table, and so they weren't paying any attention to the gambling much and they were chasing off to Idaho with the tables and playing up there in Sun Valley and around. So Knute Nelson said, "I'd sure like to get in, if I had a little money. I think you could make us a little money." And I said, "I'll put up the money and you run it." So he started it and I hardly even went into the gambling place. I might go in and gamble a little bit, but most of the time I didn't even go around them much, unless they were around where they was having a dance or something like that.

Now, when you said you went in with him, did you buy this from the people who went to Idaho? Who owned it then?

They did. But they leased the gambling to Knute Nelson. Then Knute Nelson got my money and he went and started gambling. He wasn't a very good gambler—he was smart enough, but he was too trusting. He'd start a game a-going, but he'd rather play pinochle for fun than he would to deal cards, so he'd just pick some stranger and say, "You want to deal this?"

Oh my! So you invested money into the gambling portion?

Yes. And I come out pretty good. I don't know how much, because he'd just come in and say, "Here, we made a little money," and he might give me a couple hundred dollars, three or four hundred dollars.

Was this right next to your stores?

Right next to the store. And I'd go in there once in a while and look round, and if somebody was doing something and I could see it, well I'd tell him if they were hiding cards or something like that. And that's about all I ever did. And I didn't deal or I didn't do anything. In fact, I didn't know anything about gambling. But I made a little money.

Did you get more involved with the Owl?

No, but later I did when Frank Eaton was killed in a car wreck. He was old, about like I am now, or maybe a little older, and he run his car into a truck, following a basketball game.

Oh dear!

And then Ballin died with diabetes. So Mrs. Eaton was living in Reno and she called me. Oh, in the first place, we leased it. A fellow by the name of Jaramillo and I leased the Owl Club.

Oh, you took a lease on it.

Took a lease on it from Mrs. Eaton and we run the Owl Club.

What year was that? Approximately what time period?

It was around in the fifties. And we couldn't make it because Jaramillo, somehow he never made any money in there, so we gave it up. We was paying big rent—to us it seemed big—it was seven hundred and some odd dollars a month. So we gave it up.

How long did you have the lease on it? Could you tell us, in a little more detail, to clarify about the role of Adolf Jaramillo and you, what your connection together was.

Adolf Jaramillo and I were good friends all the time, and I'd known him quite a while, and I'd hired his brother, and we just had a good friendship all the time. So he wanted to go in partners with me in the Owl Club. So he said, "I'll take you in partners over in the Bucket of Blood, and then I'll go over and run the Owl Club."

What was the Bucket of Blood?

It was just a bar.

And where was that?

That was right across from the old meat market, right across the street. And so we went partners on the Owl Club and the Bucket of Blood, but he always had in his pocket a big list of [laughs] people that owed him money, and we never made very much money. So then we gave that up. And we dropped the Owl Club and the Bucket of Blood. He got out of the Owl Club, but he stayed in the Bucket of Blood and sold out later.

Then you said you got into cattle ranching?

Yes, while I was in the store, why, I went out to Knute Nelson's and he didn't have

anybody out on the ranch. So I said, "Knute, how about putting some cattle out there?" And he said, "Well, you got some?" I said, "No, I'll buy some!"

Where was that ranch?

That ranch was out at the mouth of Hilltop Canyon. So I went out and I bought thirty-three head, but I bought all steers. [laughs]

You got into everything! Was this still in the fifties?

Yeah.

You were doing a lot of things!

Yeah. So I kept them and the first year I didn't sell them. The next year I kept them and they got so big and I hauled them to Twin Falls, Idaho, and they said, "We never saw such big steers!" [laughs]

Which of all these activities did you enjoy the most? Or did you enjoy all of them?

Well, I enjoyed them all.

I notice also in the fifties, doing a lot of things, you got married. Tell me about that.

Yes. Carmen had got divorced and so I'd met her at the dances. Well, I even knew her in high school.

Is that right?!

And I used to go down and visit her when she was in high school.

You liked her.

Yes, I liked her, and her sisters. So we knew each other quite a while. And finally it come down to getting married.

How long had she been divorced?

Oh, I don't know how many years, but it must have been four or five, or longer. I said, "Well, it's about time we got married." She was a Catholic and I wasn't, so it took a little while to get around to it, but we did it.

Now let's go back a little bit. You said you went to dances. Did you dance through your youth?

I always went to dances.

And how long were you going with Carmen—I mean, seriously, before you married?

Oh, I guess about two or three years, maybe longer.

Did you have children?

Yes, we had one boy, which is Ramon, spelled the Spanish way.

And when was he born?

He was born May 14, 1956.

And did Carmen have children in her first marriage?

Yes, she had two girls. The youngest one was named Connie and the oldest one was named Sherry.

Were they young when you married?

No, Sherry was going to school down in California, a Catholic school. And I think when we got married she was just about in college. And Connie was smaller. She was my partner, and when we drove cattle in, why, she'd go and tell the priest, "Butch needs me to help him drive the cattle in and I won't be able to come to church."

[laughs] Did she live with you?

Yeah. And she'd come in and she'd have her saddle in the house and her hair all in curls. Her mother would have it there expecting her to go to church. Well, she'd sleep with all the curls and everything on the saddle, and in the morning she'd get up and go out with me and help drive the cattle in to ship them.

Oh, that's wonderful! Tell me about your son.

My son, when he was born, why, it was the greatest moment in my life, and we always got along good. But he turned out, he wasn't too healthy. He had water up on the brain and we took him to Salt Lake. He's still got all the tubes and everything in him, but he's fine. He works for the government.

And where does he live?

Las Vegas.

Do you see him frequently?

Oh, yeah. He's supposed to be up here now. He's going to come before Christmas, but he's waiting until he gets three days off because it's a long drive. We used to go down there all the time, but we can't because I can't see to drive.

Oh, and Carmen doesn't drive?

She don't drive that well. She could drive down there fine, but she wouldn't want to drive in the city. She's a good driver, but she's just never done it.

Are the girls married?

Yeah, they're all married. They married carpenters. Both of them got new houses. Sherry got one that's worth about maybe well over \$500,000. But they're going to sell them, and then they're going to build a small one, they say. But this one here has got, in the basement alone, I think 4,800 square feet.

Oh my! Did your son get married?

No, he never got married.

Are there grandchildren from the girls?

Yeah, we got two boys from Sherry, and we got a boy and a girl from Connie—and they all got new houses! And big houses Like this is a pretty good-sized house. Well you could put this one inside them.

Oh, my! Now let's get back to the fifties when you were doing all of these things, all of these adventures and getting married. Where were you living at that time?

I was living up with my folks.

And then when you got married, where did you live?

We come right down here.

To this house?

This house here.

I see. You bought this house? or was it yours?

No, it was my wife's and I bought her husband's interest in it.

Oh, wonderful. And how did your life change after you got married? Did you still get into all these ventures? or did this change?

No, it didn't. We made pretty good money all the time—nothing big, but we did good and we took our first vacation after we'd been married about a couple of years and took one of her sisters and the two girls and we went to Canada and Lake Louise. We had a nice trip. That was the first trip we ever took.

Did you slow down in your work, or just keep working hard in all these ventures all the time?

Oh, I always worked hard, and I worked from fourteen to eighteen hours a day after I got in the Owl Club, and I worked seven days a week.

Oh, my! Now when you say you got in the Owl Club, what did you actually physically do in the Owl Club?

Well, I just overseen everything. As far as cooking, everybody said I cooked, but just a little bit. I taught them how to cook the pies like I wanted them.

Let me back up a little, because I thought you only had an interest in the gambling and leased it for a while. When did you take over the Owl Club and the restaurant? We haven't mentioned that.

Well, we just never got to that.

Okay, let's get to that part.

Okay. After I'd sold the business of the grocery store and I was going out to go ranching, well, Mrs. Eaton asked me if I wanted to buy the Owl Club. She wanted to get rid of it, and she remembered me from when I was in there before, and she said, "I'll give you a good deal. If you give me \$10,000 down, I will let you have the place for \$150 a month."

Was it the size that it is now?

No, it was just a little part. It was just the building where they had the bar.

Okay, the bar and little gambling area.

Yeah, there was gambling, but they didn't have an area at that time.

The big restaurant wasn't next to it yet?

No, it wasn't there. But it was leased from Sam Baum's nephew from around Chicago someplace, in Illinois. When he come out and saw that I'd decorated the front, he said, "Say, I'd like you to buy my interest out. I'd like the same deal that you gave Mrs. Eaton." I said, "Well, that's fine!" So I jumped on it. And then after I got it, I didn't know what to do with it, so I put the post office there, but the post office didn't like it and they'd come from down the street, you know. So then I moved them around over to the butcher shop.

Had you sold the butcher shop?

No.

Just the market?

Just the market, because I'd moved that over into the grocery store, the Mendive's Grocery Store.

What part of the Owl Club did Sam Ballin's nephew own?

He owned over towards where ail the seats are in the cafe there—not the dining room.

Okay, I know what you mean.

So then we bought that out. And then Swackhamers wanted to get out of the other building and start this supermarket out here, so I agreed to buy them out.

What time period is all of this happening? Sixties? Seventies?

Oh, in the sixties, I think. And so I bought them out and I had a hard time getting out, because the bank wouldn't loan me any money, and they say I'd be in competition with the Nevada Hotel down there. They were friends with the Nevada, and they told me they wouldn't do it. So Bill Swackhamer, he was a legislator down there, so he says, "Let me introduce you to some bankers." So I went down with him and the First National Bank said "Sure!" I said, "What would you like me to put up for security?" "Oh, no security. Where would you like to pick up the money?" they said. "You can pick it up either in Winnemucca or Elko." "Welt," I said, "I do more business in Elko. I've got my accountants there, so I'll do it there." So then we had that building, and then we remodeled it all and we made a room which we call the Miners' Room, and we had picks and shovels and all that. And everything was

in that red paper and wormy wood. I think the wormwood is still there, but all that fancy red paper we had, they've all taken it down. And we had big red curtains.

Who planned that decor? Who thought to do that redecoration?

Well, I forget now. We just did it among ourselves.

"We" meaning you and Carmen?

Yeah.

So she has a taste for it.

Vet, she has good taste for that. And then it was my idea to put all the mining tools in there. And we put all the mine tools, and some of the real good ones we had stolen. I watched a guy steal part of them.

Did Carmen work with you at the club?

Yes, she worked all the time with me. But she didn't work the same hours, because she had kids.

Did you put up the motel there too? The Owl Motel?

Yes, we had our son-in-law come from Reno and he built it for us. They come here and lived a year and his kids went to school here. Then he come back and he remodeled several times, and his kids have been to school here several times. They love it now. The grandkids come up here more than my own kids! In fact, Jim comes up and he just left and he's got three kids under three years old.

Oh, my gosh!

[laughs] And we just got rid of them! One of them become four while she was here.

Oh my! Now, how were the relationships between you and the Nevada Club, because of their fear of your competition?

Well, we got along pretty good. I went down and talked to them, you know, about what we ought to do, we shouldn't lower the prices too much or fight about it. I'd go down and talk to him, and he'd come up. But we was always in competition, you know. And if we could get another hold on somebody with better music or something...and different ideas. And I went in for the food and they didn't. I got so my food was recognized all over the state. And we used to have like the governors and all them when they was going through, they'd stop in and eat, and so that attracted a lot of people. We always had lots of people from Winnemucca and Elko when they had different celebrations, always stopped, so we always had a big crowd.

When did the Nevada Club put in their bigger restaurant, because they have a pretty big restaurant now.

Oh, they had it all the time.

Oh, they have it, I see.

Yeah, that was the first thing I did when I got out of the Army. I went down there to work on putting that building up where they have the restaurant. See, it burnt out sometime while I was in the Service.

So you worked on the Nevada Club before you bought the Owl Club?

Oh, yeah.

Now, I understand you cook a lot. Tell me about your role in the restaurant part of the Owl Club.

Well, I'd always ate in San Francisco, you know, ever since I was a little kid we'd always go back. They always said, "going to the city." And so I got used to going out to good places to eat, so I tried to make the Owl Club a good place to eat. And I worked on it, and I went so far as to travel around. My wife and I took nice trips around, trying to find out good Mexican food. We went down to Texas and California and all that. Then we'd go back and talk to the people that was running it, and we'd find out a few recipes.

Could you cook?

Oh, I tried, but I really wasn't a chef or anything. I hired all my chefs. Some of them I had were lousy ones, and sometimes I'd get good ones. And then trained all our girls—instead of just hiring a girl, we'd train them. This was before they had those cassettes, you know. Before we had those, we went down in California and they had some kind of machine where it puts a picture on and you'd put a cassette in it and then you'd turn a button and turn it on. You could turn up the volume and that. So we bought that and tapes on how to serve and how to dress and everything to do with the restaurant business.

Amazing that you picked up knowing all that.

I think I read it in one of these trade manuals or something. We had to travel all over Hollywood to find out where the hell to go to get all that stuff. We was there several days and finally they showed us what they had, and so we bought all that and we come back and we trained all the girls.

Your standards were high.

Yeah.

And then did you have someone running the gambling part? someone in charge of that?

Yes, I was in charge, but under me I had different people running it. One time it was a girl, and she always bragged that she made more than any woman around the state at that time, because she was running our gambling.

Tell me, how long did you own that Owl Club, the whole complex?

About twenty-five years.

Oh, that long?! When did you finally sell that?

In 1982.

Oh, so not very long ago. Tell me some things that would reveal the changes in Battle Mountain, through your connection with the Owl Club: who came, and were there changes in the type of people?

Yes, I'll tell you one thing: Duval was coming to town, or it did come to town, and when they got in there, why.

That's the mining company?

That's the mining company. It was part of Pennzoil.

Where did they come from, Pennsylvania?

I don't know exactly where Duval comes from, but I think down in Texas, because they had a copper mine in Arizona, and they had, oh, different kind of mines all over. But

Pennzoil bought them out and so they come up here as Duval and started the mine. They said they were going to be here for at least ten years, and they're not out yet. They'll probably go out this year or next year. But it's called Battle Mountain Gold—it's been spun off.

But the same company, the same people—just change of name?

Yeah.

So was there a rush of new people when they came?

There was a rush of new people and new building and really good for our business, because we treated them right. They liked to come there, and they'd bring all their salesmen down there, and we had good business all the time. In fact, when I first started, I had two employees, and then I had to let one go, so I only had one employee. I had a janitor and myself. Then we developed. After we got our computers, I looked one day, and I was just looking there, it showed we had an average in the summertime of a hundred and twenty-five persons working for us. That included the motel and twenty-four hours a day. It included the kids that only worked a few hours and then maybe somebody else would come in and relieve them and that.

Did you still work long hours?

I still worked long hours. I'd go to work about eight in the morning, and I wouldn't come home until the big gambling was over at night.

Oh, my, so you put in a full day!

Sometimes eighteen hours, and sometimes I stayed down there two days. So when I remodeled one time, I built me an office and put a bed in it! [laughs] It wasn't a bed, it...

A little cot to sleep?

Yeah, the fellow that put in my furniture, why, he said, "I got something I want to give you, you're around here so long." So he brought out one of those soft rubber things.

Oh, an inflatable mattress?

No, it wasn't inflatable, but it was porous, real soft. He said, "You can lay down here if you want to rest." And he brought it into the office there. Then I put a bathroom in too.

Now how did Carmen respond to not having her husband around very much?

Well, I guess she was used to it.

She came down there to see you?

She come down there and she worked, you know. She helped me with the girls and see that they had clean shoes and clean fingernails, and all that.

Did you eat your meals there?

I usually ate one meal there, I think, but I always come home and ate with the kids, and then go back.

That's good. Just tell me things about the Owl Club through those years that stick in your memory.

Well, when I first went in there, I was up painting the ceiling, and we had a Twenty-one

table there, and I'd applied for my license, but I didn't have it yet, but I had a sack of silver there. I was getting ready to open it up. Well, I didn't know how to deal, so the guy come in and he says, "Say," he says, "When you going to open that Twenty-one table?" I said, "I guess I can open it up now." So I got down off the ladder and took all the paints and ladders out of the way, and I opened up the table and put the silver in the tray and got out some cards. I don't even play pinochle or anything! I didn't know anything about cards. So I started dealing Twenty-one, and I'd played it a few times, but I'd never dealt it. Well, let's see, I don't know exactly what he won now, but it seemed like it was either six hundred or nine hundred dollars.

Oh my!

Well after he was gone, I saw where he'd marked them all.

Oh! Did you get back to him?

"Well," I said, "I'll get back to that son-of-a-gun when he comes back." So he come back again, and I didn't get back to him—he got me for six hundred dollars next time! And then he got arguing with me and I put him out. Then he come back another time and I said, "You're finished here, keep on a-going."

Oh my! But you didn't get your money back?

I never got my money back. Then I decided to get me a dealer, and I got me a couple of girls and we trained them a little bit, but I still didn't know how to keep the [laughs] hustlers out, so when they'd have a big dance or anything, there was always more people around trying to steal the money, and

the only thing that saved me was some of these buckaroos that come in to play. You know, they get pretty rough. So they wouldn't let the guys push them around, and I'd usually win a little money, because these guys couldn't tell what the buckaroos were doing. [laughs] So we didn't make much money for a few years. Finally we learned how to keep them out pretty good and we started making a penny. But it took a few years. And the state was as bad as I was, because I stopped one guy from stealing from the machines, and they made me come down and... Well, I'd kind of hit him a little bit, you know, and so they made me to come down and see him.

Oh, you mean the one who was stealing?

Yeah.

How could they steal from the machines? What could they do?

Well, they use wires. They stuck wires in and make it pay. And they could stop the reels that way. And the state didn't know what they were doing, and I showed them where the reels were all chewed up—you know, they used the sharp wire to stop them—and they told me that was nothing, that was the paint falling off. I told them what I thought, and they said, "You didn't have any right to hit that guy." And I said, "Yes, I did, because he was going to hit me, and when he drew back, I didn't, I just hit." I didn't hurt him bad, I knocked him down and hustled him out the door. But they come back here five times to talk to different people about that. And they had me come down and see them. Finally they said, "Okay, if there's nothing comes of it, why, you can go." So I went back and they told me not to hit anybody else. And I said, "I

can't help it. If they swing at me, why, they're on their own." So that was the last time I ever heard from the state.

Were there slow times when the mining ended?

The mining never ended. There was slow times, because when we first started we had to take the money out of the slot machines and that to help pay the help. But we done well when we sold out the ranch and all we had out there.

Oh, you sold the ranch out?

Yeah, and I didn't own the ranch, but I owned the cattle. We had a thousand head of cattle by then, and I sold them for two hundred dollars a head.

When did you do that?

[pause] Just about the time I was going in the Owl Club—just before. Because we had that money, that two hundred thousand dollars, what we sold out of the [ranch].

What made you decide to sell the Owl Club in 1982?

Well, I was old, I was sixty-seven. My wife and I argued about it. She said, "You were sixty-six," [laughs] but I think I was sixty-seven then. And we sold out the Owl Club. We just wanted to get out and retire, because we had enough money to. And it wasn't to travel, because we always took a month off. And we took good trips. We traveled pretty near all over the world except Russia and India.

Would you close the club down that month? Or did you have a manager?

We never closed the club one minute in the twenty-five years, and both my mother and father died and we never closed it, and her father died, and her mother.

Did you have good help who managed it when you were away?

I was always in good health, because I was walking then just like I walk now, only I used to run then, instead of walk.

Oh my! But did you have someone at the Owl Club that you trusted when you were gone?

Yes, we had different employees, real good. We had good employees and we tried to pay them good.

To keep them.

Yes, keep them. We gave them a plan, a money plan that we put so much of their wages in a fund, 15 percent of what they made. And then if they wanted to put more in, they could.

For retirement?

Retirement. We just didn't start it soon enough. A Jewish fellow told me about it when I was on a trip, on a cruise.

Told you about this plan?

About this plan. But it took me too long for it to soak in. Finally I went to my accountants and I asked them about it and they said, "Oh sure!" And I said, "Well why didn't you tell me sooner?!" They said, "You never asked us!"

Oh dear! So you were a good employer.

I tried to be.

That's good.

But it was still profitable. And I told my kids, all of them, that the way I figured it, from the way I was running it, that they could make themselves good money and in a few years they could be a millionaire if they'd come in and work it just like it was. But none of them wanted to. The ones down in Reno were contractors and they all done good. And my son, he was with the government, and I told him that he could come up and take it. But I said, "In your condition, I think you should stay right with your government job and retire from the government."

So who did you sell it to?

I sold it to some people in Reno. They came up and it was one fellow, Nightingale, that owned a big club down there, Cal Neva: and the accountant that worked for him. His son, Nightingale, come in with this accountant and they bought the place.

Did you know them? How did they know you were selling? Or did you advertise?

Well, they had picked out another fellow from Ely, and Nightingale knew him, and he knew this other fellow was a good manager. So this fellow come up to see me and he says, "I'm going to get Nightingale—we're acquainted—and I'm going to come up and see if I can't buy this place from you." And I says, "Yes, I want to sell, because we're old enough to get out." So he went down and got Nightingale and Nightingale got his son and this accountant

to come up and they looked it over and they bought it.

So they came to you. You weren't advertising that you were selling?

No, but I was letting everybody know.

Oh, I see, so by word of mouth, these people came to you.

Yes.

Did the building of Highway 80 bypassing town and slowing traffic through Front Street have any affect on your decision to sell?

No, because we was thinking about it before that went through. Because, you know, when you get round sixty-five and all those hours and you never spend much time together, why.

Yes, that was good. How did you adjust when you sold it? It was yours for so long!

Well, with me, I went out on long walks out in the hills. I'd look over and I'd see a mountain and I said, "I wonder what's on the other side?" Instead of driving there, I'd get out and walk. Sometimes it'd be dark before I'd get back.

Wonderful.

Then I went fishing lots.

Did you go over to the club after you sold it?

No. I go over there and get the paper in the morning, and I still do.

But you don't go in there to eat or gamble?

Oh, once in a while we go in and eat. Well, not all the time do they have good food.

Not like when you were there.

No, they don't pay that much attention to it. We was there the other night and it was good, real good. I would say it's probably the best place in town to eat right now, but I don't know, we don't go out to eat much. We're always eating here, we're always on a diet. But we eat two diets instead of one, so it don't do us much good! [laughs]

Now, when the county seat moved from Austin to Battle Mountain, I know there was a battle with Austin.

Well we battled them for forty or fifty years.

Tell me about that: working towards getting it moved here, and then the relationship with Austin where you were born and probably still have friends and people. What were the changes in Battle Mountain once it became the county seat? That's not very long ago.

Well, it undoubtedly helped Battle Mountain by getting a number of people. We used to have to go to Austin for everything, and they only had a few people, I think several hundred people, there, where we had...well, it was up to about over a thousand at that time. So we undoubtedly got more people down here, and Austin was extremely angry with us. And I don't know what to say, but it probably helped the town of Battle Mountain, and it probably hurt Austin.

Do you still hear anything from the people you know in Austin?

Well, a little bit, but it's people that used to live here that went to Austin to live. We do hear, but myself, nobody's ever mentioned it to me up there.

Does it make it easier for the people in Battle Mountain, having that pass?

Yes, it does.

The county seat and the courthouse?

You bet it does! It makes a lot of difference.

What was that building before it became the courthouse? I know it was a school, but then in the interim before it was the courthouse?

I think it's always been kind of part of the courthouse.

I see, in other words, even before the county seat?

Yeah, because we did most of the business down here, and the sheriff stayed here and all. A lot of the people worked right here instead of in Austin anyway.

I see. One of the things that I observed in my visits here—I came as a stranger and I love Battle Mountain—and another thing that's so unique that I don't see anywhere else is that people can leave their doors open and their cars open, and a bike without being locked up—which is very unique in this country. Has it always been like that? Is it changing now?

It's changing now, but it's changing for the worse, because when they bring all those miners in, they're from all over the United States, and there are large numbers that come

in, maybe several hundred people come in for these mines. And they bring all the riffraff with them. And so it's really not that safe now.

But compared to other places, it still seems, because several things I noticed: everyone takes me to someone's home, the back doors are open.

Well, mine aren't! I keep mine locked all the time.

And I also noticed something that makes it conducive to more safety—the sheriff cars are in great evidence for such a small town.

Yes, they have plenty of cars! [laughs]

Yeah, and they're driving on that main road and around town, so that's an inhibitor to crime, right?

Yes, that's right Yeah, and I think we do have a fair Sheriff's Department, no matter what they say—they're always blaming them—but I really think that we do have a fair Sheriff's Department.

Now I'm sure there are many things that I haven't asked you, so what else can you tell me that relates to the Battle Mountain area, Lander County, that people would want to know about when they listen to and read your interview or look up the history of this region? Have we missed things that you've made notes about?

No.

You've lived here practically all of your life, so you know Battle Mountain more than most. What do you see in the future of Battle Mountain, let's say in the next ten years?

In the next ten years, I think the future of Battle Mountain is good because the mines last about ten or fifteen years on the average, and I think that the mines will be working unless the price of gold goes down. For that one reason, I think the people will be able to do fine for the next ten or fifteen years here.

I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for sharing your long experience and life here in this region which will be very valuable to the people studying this part of the country. Thank you so much.

Well thank you, and I'm just sorry I couldn't do a better job of it.

You did a great job! This is the end of the interview.

CLINTON GEORGE “BUTCH” HINMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



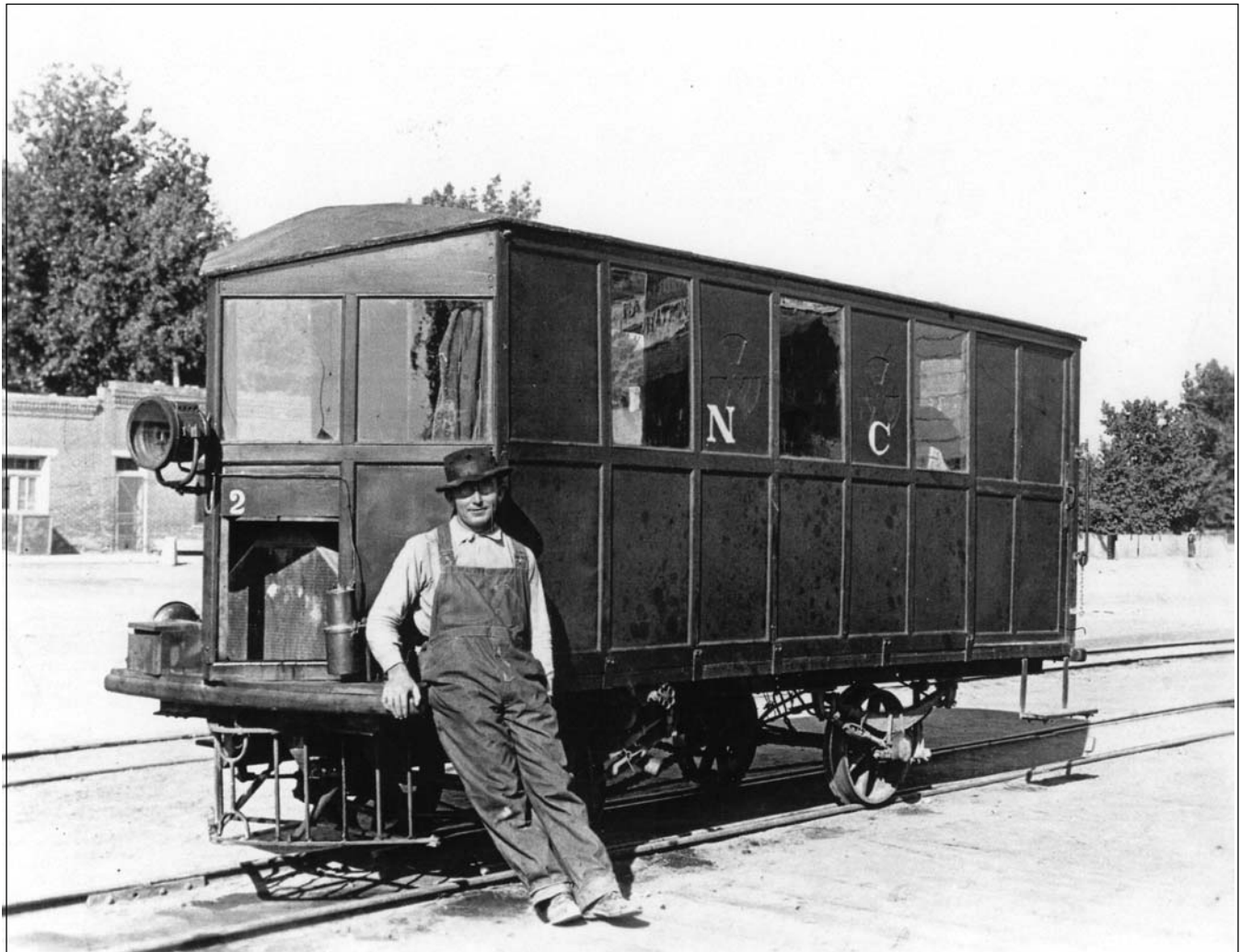
CLINTON "BUTCH" HINMAN, APRIL 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Front Street (called Main Street) Battle Mountain, Nevada, ca. 1930

(Copied from postcard owned by Hinmans)



George Hinman, father of Clinton "Butch" Hinman. Rail car, Battle Mountain to Austin.

(Original photograph owned by Butch Hinman)

THE BATTLE MOUNTAIN NEWS 3
 Saturday, November 20, 1965

THANKSGIVING MENU

ASSORTED SALTED NUTS

UTAH CELERY ★ JUMBO CALIFORNIA OLIVES
 GREEN ONIONS ★ RADISHES ★ CARROT STICKS
 LOUISIANA SHRIMP COCKTAIL

SOUP OR FRUIT SALAD

ENTREES

ROAST YOUNG TOM TURKEY
 Dressing, Giblet Gravy, Cranberry Sauce 2.95
 BAKED SUGAR-CURED VIRGINIA PREMIUM HAM
 Mandarin Sauce 2.75
 BAKED GONDOLA OF LOBSTER
 With Fresh Mushrooms, Thermidor 4.50
 ROAST PRIME RIB OF BEEF, AU JUS
 Yorkshire Pudding, Creamed Horse-Radish Sauce .. 3.95
 NEW YORK CUT STEAK OF STEER BEEF
 Mushroom Caps, Butter Maitre d'Hotel 4.25

FRESH CANDIED YAM BOAT IMPERIALE
 BAKED IDAHO POTATO IN FOIL
 LONG BRANCH FRIED POTATOES
 FRESH STRING BEANS AMANDINE

DESSERTS

HOT MINCE PIE, BRANDY SAUCE ★ PLUM PUDDING
 COINTREAU PARFAIT D'AMOUR
 PUMPKIN PIE ★ OLD-FASHIONED FRUIT CAKE
 COFFEE ★ TEA ★ MILK ★ AFTER-DINNER MINTS
 Children Under 12 Years of Age, \$1 Less Than Menu Price

THE OWL CLUB

BATTLE MOUNTAIN, NEVADA

CLINTON GEORGE “BUTCH” HINMAN ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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GRACE ERCHANDY INCHAUSPE**PREFACE**

Grace Erchandy Inchauspe was born in the Pyrenees in France in 1937. When Paul Inchauspe returned to France looking for a wife, he and Grace met, married and returned together to Nevada. Grace describes their Basque wedding before they left, and her adjustment to a new country and life. She eagerly went with Paul to the sheep camps and describes in detail how she learned to cook for the shepherders and participate in ranch life.

After just a few months Paul had an opportunity to purchase some ranches and a house. Grace tells of their early hardships, working together to save money and establish their ranch. They had three daughters who, at a very young age, started the natural process of helping in the house and on the ranch. Some of their fondest memories are their times together at the sheep camps. Pauline and Eveline work with their father in all of the ranch labor. Granddaughter Katrina, now

13, follows in their footsteps—and on her own horse.

The Inchauspe's beautiful home reveals Grace's artistic creativity. She describes the gradual transition of creating their home with the help of a Basque friend from Elko, starting by designing a new kitchen, and gradually remodeling and decorating the house. Grace ordered everything from a variety of catalogs. There is a sense of joy in the household, all working together, with love for each other and their land.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Grace Inchauspe at her home at Silver Creek, Nevada, May 10, 1993.

Good morning, Grace. I'm so pleased to be here today to interview you. Would you please first tell us your name.

Grace Inchauspe: My name is Grace Inchauspe.

What was your name before you married?

My name was, in French, before I was married, Gracieuse Erchandy. It was shortened when I came to this country, because it was a French name. But my name means “graceful.”

Oh, that’s beautiful. Tell me where and when you were born.

I was born in Ispoure in the Pyrenees, in France, [April 8, 1937].

Tell me a little bit about your parents.

My dad is Jacques Erchandy. He came to the United States as a young man and herded sheep in California and Nevada, for a few years. He went back in 1932, met my mom, and they were married. And with the little money he made in the States here, bought the place where we were all raised.

In France?

In France, my birthplace.

How old was he when he came to the United States, do you know?

I wouldn’t know that. But he was born in 1903, and he went back in 1932. So he was twenty-nine years old when he came back. So he was in his twenties when he was here.

Did he talk much about that experience? Did any of his experience help you with your decision later to come?

No. We knew he had been here and he would tell us stories, but it was so far away and it didn’t...I wish I had listened more, after I came here, to his stories. But I was only twenty years old when I came here myself. And my coming here was kind of fast. I met Paul in November, and I was gone in February. So I really didn’t have time. But later on, I did want to know more about his stay here. He would tell us how hard it was for him. They had no sheep wagon, there were no tents—they were in the open herding sheep and all that, and it would snow. And I remember him telling us they had to put the tarp over their head, and there would be snow on the bedroll. I remember stories like that, but later I wished I did listen much closer to him. But we were kids, and you always think you have more time, too.

I want to bring you back to France. I want to know a little bit about, just briefly, the kind of a life you lived before you came here—but not telling about coming here—a little bit about your life back there.

Well, it was a happy childhood. We didn’t have very much. We had no running water in the house. I remember my mom helping my dad in the fields. I was the oldest girl and I had one sister and three brothers and how she would leave me in the house watching the younger brothers and sister. I remember the birth of my two youngest brothers. They were born at the house, and I remember their birth. I was young, but those things stay in your head. We walked to school, all brothers and sisters, and all the children—we walked together, we would come home for lunch and go back in the afternoon. I went until I was fourteen years old. I went to school in the village right there, and then being the oldest

daughter in family, I had to stay home to help out with the farm and so that my oldest brother, my other brothers and sister went on to school. But being the oldest, it was a natural way there. The responsibilities fell on the older ones, all the time.

But it prepared you for your life later.

Yes.

What were some of the things? Did you do a lot of cooking and baking?

No. I really was more, I loved the outdoors, and I was more inclined to help my dad. In the later years I was there, there was a war going in Algeria, and my brother was there. And there was more demand in the outdoors.

What were some of the things that you had to do in the outdoors?

Well, we had a cow, and we had sheep—very few, nothing compared to what's in here. It was pretty small. But tended to the livestock, because they came in, they were fed in the mangers and you'd do that every day. Then there's crops: we had a little corn, a little wheat, and a little patch of potatoes and some beets. We grew lots of things at home. And you tend to those things with the hoe. And I cut fern alongside my dad there, take meals to the fields where they were, and help. It was natural, it didn't seem like work. And then when my brother was to be discharged soon, and I was engaged to go to work in a grocery and hardware store in the next little bigger town there—but meanwhile I met Paul, and then that ended. So I never did leave my home. I came here from the home I was raised. I never did work anyplace else but at home.

But I was not very inclined in the kitchen, and I was kind of sorry. My mom wanted me to go learn how to cook and learn how to sew and lots of things a young lady...But I was not inclined that way, and later I felt like how I should have gone and done those things.

Well, it looks like your daughters take after their mama, [helping more with the “outdoor” work and less with the “indoor” work]. Now I want to go back to the very first time that you met Paul.

The very first time? I worked in that store where I was supposed to go work on a steady basis—I worked there on market day. On Mondays they had the market.

Outdoor market?

Outdoor market. But this was a grocery and hardware store combined. And I went there to work on a Monday right after I graduated at fourteen—I went there to work on market day. I went on a weekly basis. I was kind of young, but was the oldest child, and as I mentioned, it was common for the older ones to help out. One day, when I was twenty, Paul came there. That's the first time I saw him. And I had a girlfriend there at the store that was engaged to Paul's brother. And that's how, the first time I met Paul. But that was nothing. I served him what he asked for. I always remember what he wore and everything. He bought some sugar to make... We grew grapes there and they make wine. Then to add to the quantity after they make their best wine, they add some sugar to something—I don't really know exactly what they do—but he bought some bark sugar at that time. I remember that. But that was it, he went. And then the lady that owned the store got sick, and her husband came to get

me to replace his wife at the store. He drove to my house. And it was November 2, and I was in church. And my mom told me, "Your employer was here. He wants you to go to the store to help out today." And I went, because she had the flu. My friend—she was the maid upstairs for those same people—and she and her boyfriend were going the next day which was Sunday, and the store was closed, on an outing to a neighboring village to a dance. Her boyfriend—Paul's brother—came that evening there, and he said, "Why don't you come along with us?" And I was a little bit shy, and I said, "No, no, no, no!" Then I guess I agreed. The next day, my friend, Marie Therese, and I were waiting for the two brothers, and that's how it started.

Is this when he came back from the United States?

Yes. He came back from the United States in 1957, in June I think he went back from here. And I didn't meet him until the end of the year. It was the first of November when I met him. That's when I met him—I didn't know him until then.

And he was away. So that when you were nearly twenty and saw him, how old was he then? Just a little older than you are?

He's about ten, twelve years older than I am.

That much older?

Yes. But I was twenty when I met him. I went to the store on a weekly basis. And at the end I had promised to go there on steady basis. But at home, they wouldn't let me go until my brother came home from the Service. They needed somebody at home

to help. So our arrangement was, when he gets home...And I was kind of waiting for that. By then, I wanted to try other things. I was waiting, I was excited about going. But then I met Paul, and everything changed. My mom told me, "Tell him you are a little bit too young. And tell him to come back in two years to get you." I said, "Mom, he won't do that!"

You loved him by then?

Yes! Yes.

Were you attracted to him when you first met him?

Well, when I saw him with the sugar, I didn't give another thought. You know, I didn't even know if he had a girlfriend. I was not one of those...I was always somebody that liked home. I was happy. And I knew my time would come. But I was not overanxious. I was considered too young [to marry] for my mom's taste, at twenty. It's thirty-some years ago, and being in the old country, things were a little different. Now, with things of today, here, that seems kind of odd, but it was not. All my friends were single, and we were a bunch of girls together that always had fun together, did things together. I was the first one of the clique to get married. It was seven or eight girls I went to school with, the same age, of the village. And I was the first one to be married. And if you had seen our bunch, you would think I would be the last one!

Let me ask you a couple of things: Did you have boyfriends that you went with seriously before Paul?

Never.

I don't think it's unusual about saying you were too young, because you weren't just getting married, you were going to leave.

That was the hard part for my mom, being right there maybe it would have been not so hard. But it was very, very far away. In those days, it was very far. She didn't have too long, because by then Paul was anxious to make something of his life. He was there all summer, and he doesn't feel right being idle. I realize all those things now. And a good thing my mom didn't have very long to be sad—everything happened fast enough. But she was crying by the time she realized. And I would say, "Why are you crying?!" I was happy, I was excited, and she was sad!

I can understand. And you can, as a mother, now.

Yes, now I can, now I can. Then I didn't. I kept telling her, "Why are you crying like this?!" But now I realize what [she was going through].

Well you were a young girl with a lot of adventure, because that was a very long distance. How long did you go with him before you both decided to marry so you could return with him?

I met him November 2, exactly: All Saints Day we go to church, and the next day we go to church. It's a day of obligation. So I was in church—I remember that exactly. And we were married civilly in January, so Paul could start the paperwork to come here. You applied for passports and this and that—visas. Lots of things went over my head, really. But we were married civilly, January 17, I think. But we delayed the religious marriage until my brother could

come on leave from Algeria, so he could be at the wedding.

And when was that, that you had that?

February 18.

Tell me about the wedding.

It was a typical Basque wedding.

We don't know what that is, so describe it all.

It was a church ceremony at first. It was about a hundred people there. It was at my village. That's traditional, that you married at the girl's [home town]. And all my family, my friends, and his family and some of his friends, I'm sure—people even he had known here were there.

They came specially?

No, they happened to be there, so they were invited. They knew each other here, and they were at the wedding. From church, everybody goes to a hotel. It goes a whole day and all night.

What did you wear at your wedding?

A white gown.

Long?

Long white gown. I can show you a picture of it.

Okay, wonderful.

I don't really like [the picture] of the group. And we had a meal and dancing.

What was the meal? Do you remember?

Big elaborate meal that...I don't really remember, but there were three or four courses.

Like lamb and beef..

Chick pea soup first, and then they served fish, and they paused between courses a lot and some go dancing. It's a big elaborate [affair]. Three courses and then desserts. And then all afternoon there's dancing. And then there were separate guests that come for the evening. The special ones are there all day, but then you add a few for the evening, and we have a meal again, and then there's dancing until five or six o'clock in the morning. That was done then—now they simplify. They usually go with one meal now. But it was a very memorable, nice, tiring [event]. [laughs]

What did Paul wear?

A suit. He had a dark suit. I believe it is still here in this house.

Did the hotel cook all the food?

The hotel cooked all the food—you go ahead. He and I went there and [made the arrangements]. But me being very young, very inexperienced, and very sheltered—never having seen any...Paul was lots more in charge of the matters than I was, but I remember going with him there to the hotel and talking to the people, to the owner, there. And they set up the menu, and they made a writing of the menu that's in each place—people know what is coming to them.

I see, like a menu at each place?

Yes. If you would come back, maybe I can find some of those menus and things to

show. Right now, I really don't think I can find one, because I kind of forget where things are. But you go back and find them, you know, in your papers. But they have a written menu of what will be served, and what wines, certain wines with this. And there was a set price. I remember how much the price was. And all that is arranged with the hotel, and then they're in charge of everything—you don't have to worry about anything.

Is it the same custom there, as it is in this country, that the bride's family is responsible for the wedding? Who pays for all of that?

Paul did. The tradition there is that people give you a gift, and it's usually monetary. Very seldom—I never seen a registry where you register for certain china. It's money—people give you money. But Paul, being he was gone from here, and he had a little money, he told everyone of his family and my family no gift would be accepted. And so he paid for the whole wedding, Paul did. Certain of my friends—by then, everybody knew I would be leaving, and they gave me little remembrances, little gifts, on the side—special little things that I still have, that certain of my closest... And the nuns, they gave me things.

Now, what kind of music and dancing was there at the wedding?

There was an accordion—somebody that goes to lots of weddings.

Traditional Basque music?

Yes. Polkas, and lots of...But I never did like to dance. I had a sister that would dance in water! She would go on her bicycle, miles! But I was very home-tied. And that's one thing that went very well with us too, because

he didn't care, and I didn't. I danced a little, by duty, or to be like the others. It was not something I enjoyed, ever. And I never missed it here. These two girls I have at home, they inherited that from me! And I really don't like it.

But you understand.

I encourage my little granddaughter to learn.

And I guess Paul also wasn't a dancer, was he?

He wasn't, so we never...I danced some there at the wedding, I remember that. But I was kind of bashful, really. But my sister was quite the opposite—she loved to dance!

Now, did you go on any honeymoon? Or was your honeymoon leaving for the new world?

Yes, it was. Paul's brother, the one that is a little bit responsible. For me meeting Paul, and his wife were married about two weeks before we did. They got married because they were coming here with us. So they were married two weeks. Paul had a car, which was very—there were no cars there, but Paul had a nice car. At first we thought all four of us would go. But then my mom was very sad, and I remember saying, "We don't need to go anyplace." We landed in Los Angeles, but then Paul took all four of us to San Francisco, and we spent a week there in San Francisco. But we never left much the home. We went on Broadway where there was a Basque hotel, and the people were very nice: she was like our mom or our grandma and very sympathetic to crying eyes and to all that. But it was nice. It was very nice. But we were kind of anxious because we were going to Nevada, and there's lots of things going through your

head, and you wonder. I remember being very anxious to get where we were supposed to be, and all those things. But I never missed a honeymoon. It was a honeymoon for us!

Let's go back over to France, your wedding is over. How long did you stay there before you left for America, and where did you stay?

About a month. We were married February 18, and our first wedding night we went to my house where I grew up.

Your parents' home?

My parents' house. But there were lots of guests there that came, and people stay in homes there—there's no hotel in the village. So when we first got home, there were too many people there, so I had to jump in bed with my sister until my folks get up. It was time to get up almost. But at first I had to go. And then somebody came to get my sister out of the bed. My new husband had to go in the bedroom where my brothers were. [laughter] So we stayed in our house for one month. We would go visit Paul's folks, which is not very far at all. We would go to his house. He never hunts here, but there he liked to hunt—for something to do, I guess—and he would take me to his house and I would visit his mom and sit by the fireplace. She was a grand lady. I never seen my mom at that stage, really. His mom was already an older and crippled person. She sat there with me, and she was telling me their childhood stories and all that. My mom was very active, still. My youngest brother was nine years old when I came here, and she was still raising *her* family, and she was not in the grandmotherly stage yet. So that's one thing I kept about Paul's mom: she was what a grandmother is. She was a nice, nice lady.

Now, during that month, what kind of preparation did you go through to prepare for that very major move?

Not much at all. I was happy. It's almost terrible to say, but I didn't even think I had to cook for my husband! I was on Cloud Nine I think.

You loved him?

I loved him and I was going to the United States! My trust was in him—I didn't worry one bit. My trust was on his shoulder. I went with my eyes...We helped at the fa I remember chopping wood by hand—you know, with the saw—with him. I remember doing that in my house, and helping. He had a car and we went to say goodbye to family members, and being that you'll be leaving, they invite you for meals here and there. It was a happy time—happy, happy time. And then we came. You cry for home at times. But it's been good. We spent one week in San Francisco, and we came to Ely where Paul had been for nine years, to his uncle. So in a small airplane from San Francisco to Ely. The weather was very bad. It was the end of March or the first of April, and the weather was very bad. I was not sick, by my sister-in-law was very sick all the way. But I was well, and Paul said he debated stopping in Reno. Of course, to us, Reno, Elko, Ely, all those were unknown. And Paul's family from Ely could not be at the airport in Ely, but they had left arrangements and the key of the house. They had a house in town in Ely, and they had left things for us to be there. We were there in Ely a couple of days. Paul had acquaintances in Ely. They would go to the Basque hotel. There was my sister-in-law and I there. We were kind of "two lost kittens" there [chuckles] on the side: didn't understand the language, but

I remember everybody trying to be so nice to us. And then one morning we went to the ranch.

Did it help a whole lot having your brother-in-law and sister-in-law along, so that you had part of your "home" with you? Did that help?

I imagine it did. Having a sister-in-law, it kind of helped. All four of us went to the Paris Ranch in Ely. It was her first trip, just like mine. She was just as young as I was, and her husband was new to this country too. Paul was the most experienced, because he knew a little English. We all depended on him too. Before we came, they knew that Paul's brother and his wife would be staying at the ranch over there to work as a ranch hand. But Paul had already decided he would start something on his own, that he wouldn't be staying there at the ranch—being that he was there nine years, he knew what the set-up was, and he knew there couldn't be too many families there. And he knew all those things. Jean-Louis, Paul's brother and his wife, needed a job right away. They were newcomers, and Paul felt like he could look round and establish himself in something he wanted to do.

Did his brother and sister-in-law stay then in Ely on the ranch?

Yeah, they stayed, and their first two sons were born there at the ranch. And it was April, lambing time, and a busy time. Paul knew all those things, and he said, "We can help through lambing," because it is the busiest time for his cousins there, and he knew the country well and he knew the job well. He said, "We're going to help through lambing there, and then we'll look for a home for ourselves." And to me, everything he said was okay. So we were a few days at the ranch, and

then we went in the sheep wagon. I went with him, and I was in charge of cooking. That's when I first "Woke up"!

I want to go back just a little bit. How long did you stay on the ranch before you went out shepherding?

Oh, a week or so—I don't really remember exactly. We came there early April, and I would say around April 15 I was in the sheep wagon, in the sheep camp. The sheep camp is here, now. When Pauline was born, they brought the sheep camp here, because I went to the sheep camp here too. But there, I went with Paul, Paul's cousin—which was his uncle's son.

How old was the cousin?

He's the same age as Paul. And his wife used to go and do the cooking for the herders before I came. But that year she had a new son, adopted son, so I went with Paul and his cousin and two herders.

When you say you went in the sheep camp, describe that for me, because a lot of people do not know what that is.

A sheep wagon is a little bit like a travel trailer, but it's made especially to go in the brush. It was home-built, and it had a stove and a bed. Everything is in one room. They had a sink, but no water. You packed the water in. And a table where all the herders ate.

How did you cook? What kind of stove was it?

A gas stove. It was a propane stove, portable. We never had any gas stove at [my parents'] home—it was a wood stove—and no running water, no indoor plumbing. And

when I came here, I really felt like I made the step to the right direction, because everywhere we were, there was indoor plumbing, and it kind of felt good.

But when you went out in the sheep wagons, it was back to what you were used to.

I went back, but I knew it was temporary, and only the cooking kind of scared me. Because at home, to begin with, it's very different at home. We didn't have any meat. We would kill a chicken on a Sunday or a bunny rabbit—things that we grew at home. We never went to the butcher shop or things. And here, there was lots of meat. But Paul was very good teaching me. He already had lived in the sheep camps, and he knew about meals, so he taught me how to make bread and how to cook what was "sheep camp style" cooking. And with him, I learned.

Now, two questions: First, I want to know how many you cooked for: and second, did you get so that you were good and that you enjoyed it?

I don't remember enjoying it then, because being Bert, who was a very nice man, but to me, he was The Boss. I had this tremendous [desire] to please the boss. But he was such a nice man. I know my fears were all [unfounded]. But Paul was my harder one, because he wanted me to do well. But there were four or five men. It was two meals a day. They would get up early, and I would be in the bed there, and they would come and drink coffee in the morning, and they would leave. And then around ten o'clock, they all come one-by-one—somebody stays with the sheep all the time—and they come and they eat a big hearty breakfast: ham and sausage and things like that. Then their main meal was in the evening. You packed water and there

always were horses there that you walked to the water. It was kind of fun.

Now Bert was...

Paul's cousin. And he was there with us at the sheep camp. We were on his ranch there, but he would spend the day with the sheep and with us, and then he would drive home to the ranch. We were never farther than five or six miles, I would say. He would go spend the night at the ranch with his family. But in the mornings, he would come back.

So you and Paul would stay in that sheep wagon?

In the sheep wagon. Our bed was in the sheep wagon, and the herders had their own little sheep wagon when they went to sleep in there.

Were you the only woman there with all these men?

I was the only woman.

Now, I want you to describe, totally, one of those days after you had learned to cook, from the minute you woke up until the end of the day. Describe one day: what you cooked, how you did it, and through the whole day. Take a typical day.

I would get up, and nobody would be there.

What time?

I know they got up really early, because they had to be at the sheep at daybreak, before the sheep get up. There were things they did those days. They had to be near

the sheep, and sometimes you go horseback three or four 'tiles, because the camp doesn't go everywhere in the brush. Then I would get up. I don't remember exactly—it would depend, I imagine, but I would get up at daylight.

Did someone have to wake you, or did you automatically wake up?

No, no, I was all by myself there. I would get up. I'm sure I had no trouble, because I was anxious. And I got ready for them. And there was no schedule, so you keep watching through the door and through the windows. When you see a rider come, then you start. I was always ready for them.

When they came, you cooked to their order?

No, I would be ready to give them... Like if there was a pot of beans, that would be done ahead. But the ham and the eggs—I kept a watchful eye for them, and when I saw them—I knew pretty much the direction the sheep were—so when you see the rider, that's when the fire went a little higher, because they didn't have all day to stay there. When they came there, they ate, and they went to relieve the other herder that would come. Or, if things were pressing, you would pack the other herder's meal in special things and he would take it to the other herder. Paul usually was the last one to come. He had the most responsibility. That's why Bert was very happy to have Paul there. Paul was a good worker. Bert felt Paul was much more... And then usually the two cousins would be there, and they would discuss this ewe and that ewe. Then I would be there, and I listened. But they were always very kind to me, Bert and his brother Pete. They were always very kind to womenfolk.

I'll bet they were very happy to have you there. Who cooked before you came?

Bert's wife went to the sheep camp.

Now, you said you'd be alone. Would you get up to put up that first pot of coffee? You said they would get coffee and come back later for breakfast. Who put up that first pot of coffee?

It was set up the night before. I did set it up. There's no hot water, so the big coffee pot would be sifting on the burner before Paul and I retired. In the morning, three o'clock, we set the alarm and Paul would get up and start the fire under the coffee pot and jump back in bed lots of times. I remember that, because it was cold water and a big pot, and it took [a while to brew]. There was funny little noises in the sheep wagon that I still remember: the wind in the chimney. You know, there were funny little noises. And I remember the coffee pot noises and all those things. Then he would get up, and they drank their coffee there, and then saddled up the horses and left. And I would be there laying in bed. Maybe I did get up once or twice with them, because I felt funny. When the sheep wagon came here, I had a curtain between, where they wouldn't see me in bed.

In other words, when they were drinking the coffee, you were like right here in bed?

Right there in bed.

And you were sleeping?

I was not sleeping.

But you just didn't have a place to dress.

Yeah. I was there, and it was too early for me to get up, still. So I was there, and probably even dozed off after they go.

Alright, now you're going to get up and make the great big breakfast for them?

For them. And then do the dishes and plan the meal. I didn't read or anything. Later on, when we were in this place and I went to the sheep camp, I always had some magazines and things. And I had my children, too, then. But then, I didn't speak any English, and I didn't even have a radio, or anything. But I really never remember being lonely. They night-herded sheep—took turns watching the sheep at night, so they wouldn't scatter. And when it was Paul's turn, I would go with him too, so I would be with him. I remember telling him, "You sleep," because he had to work all day. And I would walk around the sheep and watch them.

Now, when you went with him, you also cooked during the day?

Yes.

And you'd go with him at night. And what did you stay in? what did you sleep in when you went...

We went in the pick-up, the company pick-up, near the sheep, where the sheep had their bed grounds and they were having the babies—some of the ewes were having babies. So they wouldn't take off at night, we would go there. And it was the custom there in the Ely operation, that we never did here. You know, each operation has their own thing. Their space, their range, was more limited than it is here. And those sheep were not allowed to travel as much as they wanted to travel! So they had to be watched over. I remember going maybe two, three times. And then that spring, we were there at the sheep camp, and one afternoon in the evening,

Paul's uncle, Beltran Paris, came to the sheep camp where we were. Paul was not in the sheep camp—he was still working in the brush, on the range. And Paul's uncle waited there with me. That evening he told Paul, "There is a ranch for sale in Austin. And if you're interested, we'll go into partnership." I never will forget that day. We sheared the sheep first, before we go lambing—they cut the wool to the sheep. And the wool buyer which was Basque, that came to see about their wool there in Ely, was also a wool buyer for this operation. So through this wool buyer, Grandpa Paris [Paul's uncle, Beltran Paris] learned that the owner here, which was Basque, wanted to sell his place in Austin, and told Grandpa. When he went to see about Grandpa's wool, he told Grandpa, "There is a ranch in Austin for sale." And Grandpa Paris knew that Paul would be staying there, and he knew that Paul was a capable man. He told Paul, and Paul was very excited. He said, "Yes!" It didn't scare him one bit—it didn't me either, but then I didn't have much sense in my head! [laughs]

Now, who went into the ranch with him?

The two sons of Grandpa Paris: one was Bert, and his brother Pete. And those two were the two sons that Grandpa Paris had in the ranch there. And he came there, and that's when the wheels started [turning] to come to this operation. I don't believe we came right away, but on the first trip, when it was lambing time, the biggest job was done there, it was set up with the wool buyer that we would come to see about this place. So Bert, which was the oldest son of Grandpa Paris—and usually the older son gets the responsibilities—Paul and I and Bert came to see where the ranch was in Austin.

Now, how long had you been at Grandpa's ranch before you came here to buy this property with Paul's cousins? Was it years?

No, no, no, just a month. We just got there in Ely, and Paul said we'll stay here for the lambing duration, and then we'll look. And while we were lambing...

Just one month!

We came to Ely April 1, and with the deal all closed up, we were here June 17.

Incredible!

Paul and I drove here June 17, 1958, in a car that the cousins let us borrow. We came in a Pontiac that was Bert's car, I think. It was a brown Pontiac. I came with a set of sheets and a few towels and our very personal, very few things that we brought from France. We came with those things. The lady that was here cooking was Basque, and her husband was Basque also. So it kind of helped. I had met them when they were going through the deal. I would come with them almost every time—I would come with Paul and Bert and whoever—maybe Grandpa came too, a few times, but I was always...

So you saw the place.

And I knew the people, because they would leave me here at the house while they were looking at the range, and looking at this and looking at that. Usually, I never went out with them. They would leave me here with the lady.

How did you feel about this move? Were you excited? Was it a little frightening?

Excited, mostly. I was a little bit scared all the time, because I was the shy type. But I was always excited. I remember thinking, "We'll give it our best try, and it'll work for us."

And you had confidence in Paul.

Yes, yes. And that's what carried us through, too. [chuckles]

So now you're here. What was here in the house? You bought the house as well?

Yes. There were three ranches.

Did you buy all three?

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So now you're here. What was here in the house? You bought the house as well?

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Did you buy all three?

Yes. It was the same operation. St. John LaBorde owned three ranch one was over the mountain on the Smokey Valley side, and the name was Bush Creek. And when we came here, June 17, the LaBorde crew was haying in Bush Creek. So coming from Ely, we stopped at that Bush Creek ranch, and they were haying there. And I don't know how—we didn't stay very long there. But we stopped there and Paul went right to work. But this Mary Aria was cooking. When they bought this place, they took over the place April 10. The operation was backdated to April 10, because that's the first sale. The wool sale went to the Paris and Inchauspe business. That's when we started collecting money and paying expenses. But the same crew that was working for St. John LaBorde, had promised St. John LaBorde they would stay over until the transition took place. So the same herders, and the same ranch manager. St. John LaBorde was already an old man. We stopped there at Bush Creek

and finished haying there. And she was cooking—Mary Alla was cooking for the crew. And I remember she was a wonderful cook that cooked in a wood stove, three nice meals every day. This operation in those days was a regular operation: breakfast was at six, lunch was at twelve, and dinner was at six in the evening. All that changed with us. Paul was more sheep camp oriented.

They used to come to the house to eat?

Yeah, the crew came to [the house]. She had wonderful meals, but on a set schedule. We never did follow that tradition, since, because we work more the sheep camp style—they come in at ten to eat breakfast. I really, lots of times think, I wish I had those schedules. But now I'm adjusted to this. But she had breakfast every morning. I turned twenty-one soon after I got here. But I wish I'd stayed with her in the kitchen and learned from her. But I was more inclined to follow Paul everywhere he went. Had I been smart, I would have stayed with that lady in the house. But it was the easy way out—I went with Paul and followed him and helped him, I guess, when I could, out in the fields. St. John LaBorde's crew was here until summer was over. Two of the Basque boys left. Their time was up here. They really lengthened their stay here to help St. John, and they left for the old country: two nice men. And I cried when they left. They were leaving to go back there. In some ways [chuckles], maybe I kind of wished... You know. And then the people that were at the ranch, husband and wife, they had a daughter and a son—high school age children—and they left. By then things had happened here too. We were the new owners, and things then always felt like they were kind of looking out for the previous owner yet. By then it was known that they would be leaving.

That fall, before school started, they moved to Austin with their two children—that couple that was here. And then everything fell upon me.

Now, when everyone was here, did everyone stay in one house? Or were there other houses?

No, we were all here. They had their room in their house. Their children slept upstairs, and I slept in the same bedroom. I'm there now.

You and Paul?

Me and Paul. But we were all here in the house. They were the tenants of the house when we came here, and nobody didn't think about... It wouldn't have worked very long—it had to become our house sooner or later. But they were here until they moved to Austin. So the daughter was the last year of high school. They stayed in Austin so they wouldn't uproot her. And they went to work in the hotel there. But we were all here.

Who did the cooking for everyone?

She did. She was paid, and we ate at her table. I went with Paul, or their son. I would wash. We had an old wringer-type washing machine outside. There was no automatic thing. And I would do the wash, and that young boy, he was fourteen or fifteen, and over and over he would tell me, "Shirt, shorts, socks." I was learning [English], and he would help me. He was the best thing. Then when we had free time, he and I would go fishing in the creek.

How old was he then?

Fourteen, I think he was. He still comes to see us. He would always tell the story—I

would never catch any fish, I didn't have the knack to catch the fish—he always would tell, half the fish, I caught. [laughs]

Now, his parents were Basque?

Both Basque. She was born in this country, but Basque parents, and he was from back there. They still live in Reno, and we do see them once in a while. But the young man that taught me the first words [of English] is Basque, from Basque parents, but he's in Reno.

Was he born in this country?

He was born in this country—not in this house. I think he was already born by the time his parents [came here]. And his mom was the step-daughter to St. John LaBorde. St. John LaBorde was married to an Austin lady. She was a native of Austin, and she was very educated. She was a notary public and she kept the papers for lots of ranches. We found here lots of things, lots of bookkeeping that this lady had done. She had a cook here. When St. John LaBorde was married to his first wife, they were the ones that built this house. Her name was Lena, and she built this house with John. There were three LaBorde brothers here when this ranch was established. But then hard times hit, and they filed for bankruptcy, and two brothers went out. But with the smarts of this Lena, one brother managed to stay here. But the two other brothers had to move on. But they were in partners here.

Let me ask you this: First of all, do you know Lena's last name?

Her maiden name was Sciuchetti. I can't find the spelling in all the books here.

That's alright, I'll find it.

She was a Sciuchetti. And if you ate at Carole's Kitchen, you met Bill Givens?

Yes.

Bill Givens' mom and Lena were sisters. And Mrs. Shovelin in Battle Mountain was another of Lena's sisters. And he was a state senator. They were from Battle Mountain. That's the three sisters I knew. Bill Givens' mom kept the books after Lena passed away.

What happened to the first wife, before he married Lena?

No, Lena was the first wife.

So she helped build the house.

She was here when she built this house. She passed away in the forties [1940s], I guess. I never met her or anything. Then St. John remarried a Basque lady—I don't know if she was a widow. And the lady that was working here was the daughter of St. John LaBorde's second wife. So she was related to St. John LaBorde.

Let's move now, to soon after this family left, where it's now you and Paul here. So describe to me how this new life, alone, how it was, how it started and evolved.

Well, they kept on. They left, it was the end of the summer, and my first biggest event was shipping of the lambs, which is done about twenty or thirty miles from here. That's a big event.

Describe it in detail.

The lambs had to be separated from the sheep and shipped. And there were quite a

few people there. And the meal is served by the corrals, on the range, in the Toiyabe Forest there. That was the first thing. That was my first “test.” Most of the meal was cooked here at home. Two meals are served there, and there is about thirty or forty people there. I never had any observation of the previous happenings. That was my first, and I was thoroughly on my own. I had lots of encouragement from the two fellows that left after that shipping—those two Basque fellows that went back to the old country. And Paul had seen some shippings, but they were both wonderful. They would encourage me. But I cooked the meal old country style—I will never forget—things that I knew from back home.

Like what?

Like chicken. You boil the chicken. Things that my mom... That’s what we learned at home. You go in the henhouse. I did things like that. Of course here we had lamb, and I cooked lamb also. But I went, it was breakfast, and I served them. Cooked the eggs in the ground, in the rocks, in the fire. You build a fire in the rocks. I remember doing that. It was my first. It went very well. I have really good memories of that, because they were all very [supportive]. From there on, then there was a big potato patch planted by—not by us—but by the owners before. Paul and I dug—Paul remembers how many sacks of potatoes, but a tremendous amount, like over a hundred sacks of potatoes—him and I. We did lots of cooking. They sold most of the calves when we first came here, to pay the biggest bulk of the debt.

Who is “they,” sold?

Paul and his partners. When we came here, the place was \$500,000. That was the

original purchase. And they put \$100,000 down when they signed the deal—I don’t remember that date—but the following January 1, \$200,000 was due. That was the bulk, another big bulk [payment]. So they sold about eleven hundred head of cows here. And I went to all those shippings.

What does “shipping” mean?

Shipping is putting livestock in the truck. That’s what they call it. That’s when you ship lambs or you ship cattle. They still use the same word. But it’s when you put livestock in those trucks. They go through the scales and they go. That’s what we call “shipping.” So that first summer and fall, we went through lots of shipping, because they would gather the cows from the hills, and Pete—not Bert, but Pete, the younger brother of the partners—came and helped out. Grandpa Paris and Bert were pretty much involved then. I didn’t know how to write a check. All those things came gradually to us. Grandpa came lots of times to oversee about all those things. They were involved—they had made an investment here and they *later*, as Paul proved his capabilities, they stayed in Ely. It became a hassle for them [chuckles] I think, to come here. But January 1, they paid \$200,000. So that first fall and winter, lots of the livestock was gone, so it was just Paul and I. We had a few, and we fed those few, him and I. I remember coming and cooking breakfast together. You know, we did lots of things together.

It was just the two of you?

It was just two of us. We went and dug potatoes. He went to the sheep, because when those two fellows left, one was a camp tender. One of those fellows was a camp tender, and he would make bread for the sheepherders

and all that. But then, when those fellows left, we didn't hire no camp tender. First of all, you gotta save money, so! made the bread for the shepherders, and Paul took the groceries to the shepherders, and I would help put the groceries together: you know, the certain things they needed. And Paul did that, and I imagine I went with him. I remember cooking an omelet and taking our lunch and go with him everywhere. And I would eat my lunch first! [laughs] And then "share" Paul's. [laughs]

Now, when you bought the food—going back to when you first were doing all that cooking and you had to bring the food to the men working—how did you transport it?

I went with Paul, three o'clock in the morning. Everything was done the day before, because I did not drive yet, then. And we only had one truck, anyway. So I went with Paul to the corrals before daylight, when we shipped those lambs over there in the hill. Everything was in boxes, in pots, in those big black Dutch ovens, and things. When I think back, I'm much fussier about keeping things cold [now]. But nothing happened. Thank God, nothing happened! You know, all that food, cooked the day before, and sometimes it was still kind of warm. So I would worry lots more now than then. But I went with them before daylight. Then when they told me it was almost time to eat, then the fire. And I'm sure that camp tender helped me quite a bit.

Sounds like so much work!

But you're twenty years old, and you don't think about those things. Then little-by-little, it became an event. Then little-by-little, it was something we looked forward to. In later years, as I became more, we took the sheep

wagon to sheep camp there. Then I had a stove.

You would go and stay there?

No, for the day. But Paul pulled the sheep wagon over there the day before, or something, for me. Things became much more easy for me. I learned, myself, to make more. But that first year, there was no sheep wagon. But things worked out. And my girls will tell you the happy, happy memories that we had, going. And Pauline feels like Katrina, her daughter, is missing out on things, for not going.

Now, we don't want to rush ahead too fast. This is your first year here, right?

Yes.

You had a little bit if a rough time, you had to sell cattle to pay your mortgage.

Yes.

Now, move on slowly through those early years to when things got a little better, and how your life progressed.

Well, it didn't get better. We had a drought soon after we were here—very hard, hard times.

What year is that, about?

We came in 1958, and 1959 was a very, very bad year. I became pregnant and Pauline was born at the end of 1959, in Ely. I was in the hospital there in Ely, and I remember Paul would come and visit me there, and his partners would meet him at the Ely House, and they had decided to sell the place. And

I remember Paul coming to the hospital and telling me that they had to put the place on the market. I really don't remember my reaction—I had a hard time with the birth of the baby. I ended up having a Caesarean and pleurisy and all kinds of... And being away from home and all those. And I don't remember what my reaction was. But our original agreement was that half of the operation was Paul and I, and both the other two brothers were 25 percent each. And I remember him telling me he had agreed if it would sell, that they would go to one-third each. I don't remember what they put up, or how much. I don't remember any of those [details]. But then I remember coming with the baby at home. By then we had a ranch hand here, from back home. I remember when Paul came to get me, he had told this man to keep the house warm. It was in December, and there was only one wood stove here, where those ladies are talking now. I remember walking in here, and the house was like an oven! That man had kept the fire roaring all day, and it was so hot you know. [laughter]

Too hot!

Too hot.

To backtrack a little bit: You were saying that you had a really hard time with your first baby and you were alone, and you're pretty far from the doctor and the hospital. What did you do for medical care or checkups during your pregnancy, so far from a doctor?

Bert and Pete are the two cousins, the two partners. Bert was married to an American lady. She was a very nice lady, Mary. But Pete is married to a Basque lady. Pete is Paul's cousin, but Mary Jean was Paul's cousin also—they married first cousins. And she took care of

Basques. So when I became pregnant, we would talk on the telephone. Of course, she was a partner's wife also—and she sent somebody from Ely that first spring and I started with a difficult pregnancy. And she sent someone to get me here. So a friend, an acquaintance of them, took me. She couldn't come get me—she had children in school in Ely. So she sent someone to get me for my first check-up. And then Paul would take me on a monthly basis to Ely, for my monthly check-up. Then when the baby was almost due, I went to stay with her in Ely, about a week or so—I don't remember exactly—but maybe a week before the baby was due, and they told me to stay there. He left me there in Ely. And the same with all the other children. Then after I spent a few days with her, until Paul would come get me and brought me home. She was like a second mom. She's not old enough to be my mom, but she was...

Now, when you were pregnant and you had a hard pregnancy, who managed all the work that you did? Because certainly you would have to slow down all that work.

Nobody. I was here.

You still did that?

And Paul. He's always had...And is nothing compared to what we have now. We did acquire so much more since. It was drought, there was not much haying to do, and all those circumstances. But nobody came here or took over what I did. But every year I was here I had a garden. Life went on.

You were able to do it through your pregnancy?

Yes, all the time, to the end. I always, when I was expecting Pauline, I went and did the shipping and all those things.

How long were you married before Pauline was born?

I was married in February 1958, and she was born December [11] 1959, so it kind of helped a little bit. See, when my sister-in-law came, she got pregnant right away, and that's why she was sick all the way coming. I was always thankful that I was here a little bit before I...

So she got pregnant over in...

In France. And she came here pregnant, and it kind of made it hard for her trip and all that. But I was not. And it gave me time to get kind of accustomed a little bit. And I'm sure I started picking up a little language here and there.

So now you're home with Pauline. Did you have—especially after a Caesarean—who helped you in those first days?

Nobody. I had the wringer-type washing machine outside there, but I did lots of washing by hand. But Paul was always [helpful]. You know, what was done was done, but nobody would go take care of the baby. He would go to the sheep on a weekly basis with the groceries, and I went with him with a tiny, tiny baby. I went with him. But this was only a house then—it had not been a home long enough for me. So I felt good when I was with him. So we went. She ate more cold baby food! Because we didn't have—I don't know if they weren't available, but now you warm up with this. But those days, there was none for us. First of all, we could not afford it, and we didn't even know what existed. Those didn't exist.

Did you nurse her?

Not Pauline—I couldn't. I started to, and I had pleurisy, right after her birth. One day Paul came from here to see me in the hospital. He was there for the birth, but so was Mary Jean. Then he came home to take care of things here. And one day he was coming to see me in the hospital, and he didn't have time to stop at Mary Jean's house, so he came directly to the hospital, because visiting hours would have been over if he stopped at Mary Jean's—and found me under the oxygen tent and it about petrified him! [laughs] But all those things...

Now, the house, when you first got it—you said it "Wasn't home yet." You probably hadn't added your own touches. Now you're home with Pauline. What evolved the next few years with the house and with your life? Did you start to create a home out of this house?

It took a while, because the financial thing was very...So there was no curtains in the windows. My first washing machine was when I was expecting Eveline. It was the third baby. Until then, I stayed with that old wringer type. Half of the time, we didn't have no power. But you know, it never bothered me. It never, never bothered me. When I was washing diapers by hand, I was not doing something else. So it was okay. My mom had it lots worse than I did! And I kept that.

I don't want to move to the third child yet. Did you keep in close contact with your family through the mail?

Yes. I wrote very, very regularly. And I remember, at the post office in Austin, they said the first time I went to buy stamps, they asked me "What kind?" and I went like this. [shrugs shoulders] They tell me that. I don't remember. But we wrote, and my mom wrote

very, very regularly, and I did too. And our mailbox was down the road, and I remember walking over there, looking for a letter. Paul would be gone in his job, and it was Tuesday and it was mail day and I would walk over there to get my letter. And most of the time there was one there.

What do you mean, "Tuesday was mail day"? They didn't come every day?

They only come once a week—to this day!

Really?! Once a week! To this day?!

To this day. And it was always Tuesday. So I put mine in the box by ten o'clock, and she would be there by ten o'clock to give me.

Were you thrilled with your little baby?

Yes!

And you wanted more?

Yeah. And I had Jackie. She was born about twenty-one months after Pauline was born.

Was that an easier delivery?

It was a Caesarean, and it was planned. I knew. I didn't have to go stay with my cousin. I had enough time. She was to be born October 3 [1961]. So Mary Jean, that time I had Pauline, and Mary Jean came, which is Paul's cousin, and the partner's wife, came from Ely with her younger ones, and stayed here with Pauline, because I had to be one week in the hospital. So she came and stayed. And then I came home from Elko, and Mary Jean took me to Ely for a week with Pauline, until I regained my strength, and then I came home, and life went

on. And it was always a good life, a good, good life. Those kids! When I picture them here...

Little?

Yeah.

And then you had your third daughter.

Then I had my third daughter in Elko, also. She was born September 1 [1964]. It was a scheduled birth, also. And Mary Jean was supposed to meet me in Elko, because by then, those two were already old enough that Daddy was taking [care of them]. And we had arranged he would be there for the surgery only, and then come home with his two little girls. And Mary Jean said, "I'll come to Elko for the birth of your baby." But Mary Jean, coming from the ranch also, didn't make it. I was supposed to enter the hospital at a certain time—I forget the hour—and she was not in Elko [when] we were supposed to meet. So at random we picked a motel, going down the street in Elko—it was the El Neva Motel. And I told Paul, "Well, we'll take a room in this motel for you, for tonight. And we'll ask the people there..." [emotionally] It was not very easy, but, "We'll ask them to keep our two little girls," because Mary Jean had not shown up.

Oh my!

And you know, that was the most wonderful thing that happened to us! He was Basque, and she was Italian, and we didn't know anything about it. And to this day, we are the best friends with those people.

Oh, how wonderful!

And those two little girls clung to Paul's feet. They had never seen anything. They

didn't want to stay there, but they coaxed them. And he came to sign me up. I told him, "You stay with them. I'm fine here. They'll take care of me." But he came that evening and he had left them there. And that was the beginning of the most wonderful friendship with those people, since then. And we took it just going down the road!

Just at random! And what was the name of that motel?

El Neva Motel. They sold that motel now. He's a contractor. He did lots of nice things. I had Eveline, my third little girl. I was kind of hoping for a little boy, but anyway, on the way home, we stopped... Paul came with his two little daughters to get me, and he had them dressed so cute. I had everything laid out for him. He came and we stopped at the motel to say goodbye to those people and tell them we were leaving to come to the ranch. And by then, Paul and him had a friendship going, and it was the first of September, and that's when we sell the lambs. That's the only shipping I missed, is the year that [Eveline was born.] But Paul came to get me a little sooner than the doctor wanted to let me go, because he had to go ship the lambs, and those two little girls here needed to be watched over, so he came to get me a little sooner than I was supposed to come out. And the day Paul was shipping, Sauveur came to get his lamb. He wanted to buy a lamb from us for him to butcher. And I kind of a little bit overdid it with him, and I had phlebitis, and they put me back in the hospital with my third little girl. But Paul was always... I cheated a little bit. He would sterilize the bottles and make a meal for those babies.

What a good man!

Changed diapers. You know, when there was nothing else, he would wash the diapers and bring them to bed to me. I had to stay in bed with my feet elevated for one month, and had three little girls!

Oh! Now, was your mother or your family ever able to come to visit you?

Yes, they did. That's when I really wanted them, after that third little one, and after the troubles I went through. I asked them to come. And when Eveline was—she was born in September, and the following June they came.

Did you help them with the fares?

Yes, we sent them the tickets. And the partners were agreeable, and Paul was. And they came in June, after we'd been lambing and all that. And we went to get them in Salt Lake. We went the first day... We left the ranch here before my folks left France. The first day we went to Ely, and in Ely they gave us—we had never been anyplace until then—and they gave us directions how to get to Salt Lake. We went to Salt Lake. It took us all day. It was quite a trip with those three little girls. We found the hotel by the evening, on the map that they had given us. We got to the Basque hotel in the evening, and the plane was arriving late that night, during the night. And the lady—we've had such good luck in our life—the lady from the hotel had never seen us before, told us, "You leave those three babies. There's no need for you to take them to the airport in the middle of the night. I'll watch them." We left those three girls in the hotel with people we had never seen in our lives! [chuckles] And she knew that we would never manage in the car, so she called a taxi for us, and watched the girls. You see how many wonderful people

there are in the world? Because we would have been in some kind of fix that night, trying to get in the airport where we don't know. So she watched those three little girls in their beds while we were gone. The taxi brought us back to the hotel with my parents, and I remember we took them over to the girls' beds and my dad had a Basque beret, and Pauline opened her eyes—she didn't wake up— but she opened her eyes, and the next day she remembered her grandpa with the Basque beret. She remembered the next day. The next day we took off to come to the ranch, and it took us all day from Salt Lake to come home here. And they stayed seven months. And it was the most wonderful, wonderful seven months. For me, it was really the first real vacation from things. I would go with the two oldest ones, and my mom would keep—she'd tell me, "Leave Eveline to me." It was really, really a wonderful seven months. Then they had to go. And my mom came back in 1972.

Grace, we're going to go back a little bit to the airport. When you first saw your parents, two questions: How long had it been since you had left your home? And how did they look, how did it feel to greet them?

It was something I'll never forget. It was six years since I had left home. [emotionally] The kids didn't know their grandpa and grandma. It was hard on my mom. Pauline was her first grandchild, and my being away—she had other grandchildren by then, at home—but me being away was always something she couldn't... To this day, it's like that, because I left young. And it seems like the one that's missing... is missing. So I remembered them coming down the ramp. I will never forget. I don't think I could see too good, because I was crying, probably. But it was the most... It was an amazing trip for my mom, who had

never, never left home. My mom had never, never... It was the most amazing trip. And it was a wonderful, wonderful experience for me. She adores Paul. [laughing] I think she likes Paul more than she does me! She adores Paul. You know, I don't think he can do no [wrong in her eyes]. But for the kids, it was something very, very special. They got to know [their grandparents]. They stayed long enough. I'm sure we wanted to keep them longer, but they have a farm. But my oldest brother was there and all that. But for them [my daughters], it was a wonderful experience. They [had a] great, great, rapport with [their grandparents]. They learned the Basque language very well with them. Soon after we came here, I don't know, it was some doings with the sheep—it think it was docking lambs—and we always take meals to the crew at the docking lambs. By then I drove—long before that, I drove. And how my mom was—she was so impressed to be going with her daughter and the grandchildren in the pick-up to take the meal. To my mom, it was—if you would realize where we come from and how their life was limited—she was so impressed. She couldn't get over that one day she would drive [chuckles] with her daughter. To her, that was. .

Tell me, Grace, do you have photographs of that visit? Any photographs when your parents were here?

Yes, there's some, someplace. Well, it was a little different then, about cameras and things. When I had the first baby, Paul bought me a little Polaroid camera and I took pictures to send back home. It was the right thing for me, because we had no way to develop film and things like that. I remember having some pictures of her. But then I had—the herders found a movie camera that somebody had

lost in the hills, hunters or something. And I remember taking some movies. But those movies have gone to the old country. I gave them to my brothers so they would see them there too. But there were some pictures of when they were here. Eveline was a baby, she doesn't remember her first step, but Pauline and Jackie remember the pranks they would pull on Grandpa. He was shaving someplace, and they stole his towel. They remember little things like that. Eveline was a baby. But the second time my mom came in 1972, by then Eveline was eight years old, and she would try to teach English to my mom. They'd go by the hours, trying to make her [say] words. She would never pronounce those words to Eveline's liking! She would have her repeat the same things over. I'm glad that they came. Now, they're too old—much too old to come. She wants me to go very badly to see her.

When your mother came the second time, she came alone?

She came alone.

And how long did she stay then?

She stayed one year the second time.

One year! Oh, how wonderful!

My dad could have come, but he didn't want to. The second time was more of her. The first time it was my calling. I needed it. But the second time [emotionally] she wanted to come.

And she could see your life was so much better, by your coming here, right?

Yeah. Oh yes. She really loved it here. And it was good, because they saw our way of life.

Because then they follow you so much. To this day, I talk to her every Sunday.

Oh wonderful!

And to this *day*, she remembers the people that she met with us. We went to school... You know, one year, she saw the full cycle. And she loved that. The only cloud was that my dad didn't come. He was left at home with my oldest brother and his wife and their children. He was not alone. But still, you know, being an old country...

Yeah, women don't do that.

No, women don't do that. And to her, that's her responsibility this, and her responsibility that. It kind of put a cloud. But we tried to overcome that and enjoy. She would love the school functions. They were her highlights. She didn't want to go too many places, except to those things. Those you couldn't tie her at home.

Oh, for the children.

For the children. She enjoyed that. And it was very nice, and I'm thankful that.

That your children...

...got to know them. And she saw us in our own surroundings. That's a blessing. To me, it is.

A great blessing. They're pretty old now?

Yeah, my mom is eighty-two, but a very old eighty-two. She's very crippled. My dad is bedridden for the last... I don't remember exactly. I went for the first time to see them in 1984, after twenty-six years.

Oh, you did go! Did you go alone?

I went alone.

For how long?

I didn't stay very long—a week to ten days. I went alone, and that's why I didn't stay long. Paul was here. But they were already in failing health, and she was asking me to go. And one day I realized it was not nice of me to [not go]. And Paul said, "You go."

The children were grown by then?

Mine were. It was 1984, so Eveline was twenty. She was born in 1964, so she was twenty. She was in college. And I went in the fall of the year, but very short, one week.

How did it feel? What did it look like?

It was such a short experience, that everything went very, very fast. But it did me and them lots of good. It really gave me—after that I felt so much better. Because when your mom is asking you for months and months and months, it's hard to... You know, I was happy I went. It was a nice visit. It was hard to leave, to go back [emotionally] because you don't know if it's the last time. And then I said, "I'll be back in four years." So I went back in four years. I went again in 1988. And my dad and mom were both at the airport to get me. He was in his wheelchair by then. My mom was still pretty good, still then. But they were both there, and I told my dad, "See, I told you I'll be back in four years!" And he said, "Don't tell me you did everything you told me you would do."

Now what I want to do is move you through the years of your children's growth and ranch

life to anything that you feel are steps that show changes or what life was like here with this growing family and the girls starting to work on the ranch.

They started very, very young. They've been helping since—Pauline washed dishes on a stool. The need was there, and they did it. It was a natural process. There was no allowances and you didn't get paid for this. There was none of that business. It was a natural process of things, and that's how it went. It grew. We came here in 1958, and then in 1968 we acquired more ranch. As the demands [grew], they were there. Especially Pauline. The other ones were a little different. I drove them to school every morning. I came back, did the work there, and went back to get them. When she was fourteen years old, they gave her a special permit just to drive to school. And that kind of relieved me. She drove her sister. She was always very responsible and very grown-up, and a hard, hard worker. She always was like that, naturally.

She got it from her parents!

It was a natural process of things. So as they grew, it became nicer and nicer and nicer for me. And it still is getting nicer and nicer because they want to do so much for both of us. They want to do all they can to help him, and the same way at the house. That's why God sent us girls, I guess. Had they been boys, maybe Dad would have been [helped], but Mom would have been cheated! But this way, both of us [benefit]. And they love this place as much as we do.

Did they have any social life?

No. That's sad. That's always been sad. Like I said, when she was fourteen, she drove on

her own to school. But it was only to drive to school and come home from school in daylight hours only. And all those restrictions kind of put a damper on things. And Dad, he was raised in the old country, and he was raised in a much harder time than I did, too. They were poor, very poor. By the time I was growing up, things were changing a little bit in the old country too. That ten, twelve years difference...Because in his home too, those... If he had been born in my time, it would have been a little different for him too. So he never did believe in extra basketball or volleyball.

Socials? No friends?

Well, they had friends—especially the middle one. She always had sleep-overs and this and that. And to this day, those friendships are still [strong]. They both decided they were going to be nurses, and they're both nurses. They are still in touch with each other. One lives in Los Angeles.

This is your middle girl?

The middle girl, yeah.

Now, is she different from the other two?

Yes, she's a little different. She's more outgoing. But Pauline really never had anybody that she...I don't know how to say it, but there were friends, but not really any special, close friendship like I remember I had. When I went back, all of the girls that were in our little bunch, we had like our little reunion. My friends back home, we all got [together] one afternoon. We got in one's house. Pauline never had anybody that she kind of...She was a cheerleader one time. She was not unpopular or anything like that. But it was not her...She didn't relate to any of them.

They were from town or from mining. There were none that she really...Of course, there was the same thing for Jackie. This girl that she was friends for years and years, she was from town. That doesn't mean anything, but really, it never...And Eveline the same way. She has friends, and she has friends that she still keeps up with, but not really that special. And they were like us—dances and all that, they shy away. They were both homecoming [queens]. We had the gowns and all those things, but it didn't mean a lot to them. It's not things that they felt comfortable doing. Now Jackie is altogether different. Jackie was homecoming queen, and the Fourth of July she was some kind of queen in Austin. She was in her heyday doing those things. She likes that.

She wanted to go away to university?

Yes.

She had goals?

Yes, she had decided she wanted to be a nurse. We learned in the process. We didn't know anything. Paul and I—I came from home to this home. I'd never been noplacé. All three of our girls graduated in three years of high school. Well, they were good students, because they knew it was expected. That had lots to do with it. Then the driving. It's kind of limited in Austin. It's a small town, and it's limited. We felt then that if she went to Reno—not realizing that she had never been anyplace and how hard it would have been for her. She turned sixteen when she went to the university [University of Nevada, Reno]. She turned sixteen in Reno. She was young—too young.

This is Jackie?

That was Jackie. Pauline didn't want to go anyplace. This was her thing here. She graduated in three years also, but she took over. But we left Jackie there on August 20, in Reno. She called the next day, and Paul wanted to go get her and bring her home. So I fought and fought to keep her there. I knew if she quit, it would have been much harder for her. So all year, and then it became a little easier. But it was a learning process for all of us, to have her there. It was easier for Eveline—Jackie was there to begin with, and we were much more accustomed to that.

And Eveline went to the university?

Eveline went to the university, and Jackie was there five years.

I want you to tell me about Pauline when she finished high school.

When she finished school she had already decided that she didn't want to go on to school. She already was an active participant in the ranch work. She had to take some extra credits through the University of Utah so she would finish her high school in three years. She was short a credit, or...I don't remember those things exactly. But she had to take through the university some history, or something. And I had a terrible, terrible time to have her do those, because she was always so...I had to lock her up so she would do those papers that had to go back on certain dates. It was a tremendous hassle for us.

She was a real cowgirl.

Yeah, the only thing she wanted to be is outside. And she was good outside. So when she graduated, she knew that she wanted to be here, and she was ready. For her, it was

the natural thing to do. It was her life, here. It was suggested that she could go, and this would be here and she could come back and all that, but she never wanted anything like that. I really don't know if she felt sorry later, but right then, that was her thing. She wanted to do everything. We leased the sheep to a cousin by then, and she wished we had the sheep, and she wished we had the cows. She was very...She's been like that ever since.

Very capable.

She's been very capable. They have something that I never [had]. But then I didn't apply myself. But they know livestock. Things that I did not apply myself. It never was my cup of tea. I was there to enjoy myself, to help when I could. But then they pay attention.

When you say "they," you mean Pauline and...

And Eveline. Eveline is the same way as Pauline. Jackie is altogether different.

Tell me about Jackie. She went on to college?

She went on to school, right after her high school graduation, the following fall. Her dad and I took her there and left her. It was a hard thing to do. But she was there and she made friends. In the first year she didn't have her own transportation, so she would come only now and then. She was young and we didn't buy her the car until the second year. Then the second year when she had her own car, and it became a little easier for her, she came home when she wanted to. And it was a nice process. Eveline was still in high school, driving herself to school. By then, I don't know if we had the little granddaughter, Katrina. I don't know what years—I forget. Pauline graduated in 1977, and I think Jackie

graduated in 1978, in Austin. But then Eveline graduated in 1981, and that's the year that Katrina was born.

Tell me about Katrina.

Katrina is Pauline's daughter. She's born in 1981. Her dad is Pauline's cousin, our nephew. He came to visit from France. He was born in this country. He was the son of the brother that came with us the first time, when we came in 1958.

The one who married your girlfriend?

Yes. He was their oldest son.

The baby she was pregnant with him when you came?

Yes, she was pregnant with him. He was born in Ely at the ranch of Grandpa Paris—not at the ranch, but while they were there. And anyway, in 1980 he decided he wanted to come to see us. He was born here, they left to live in France in 1965 when he was about six years old. Born in 1958, and in 1965.

And they moved back to France?

They went back to France to take over her family farm. She had an older brother at the farm, but it didn't work out. So they went home. From Ely, they went to Chino, California to work on a dairy farm. And from the dairy farm they moved back to France with three children. He was about seven years old. But in 1980, he was about twenty years old by then, and he wanted to come see his uncle and see the States, and he came for a trip. And he was here for a month only. And then they kind of fell in love, I guess. He went back from his visit with us, but he had decided

he wanted to come back and work a year here with us, and he came back. And then when he wanted Pauline to go back home with him, because he...

They fell in love?

They fell in love, and she almost went with him. And I felt all over what my mom was feeling. That's how life goes! Circles. She almost... But it was her choice. We told her, "You decide, and then we'll make..." By then we were very much depending on her help, you know—because nobody works like them. But it was her decision. I think at one point it was... Henri kept telling her that if she didn't like it over there, that they would come back here, but he wanted first to try over there. But I had the feeling—I didn't voice it or anything—but that it would never work out. I think the transition is much easier from over there to over here, than here over there. I did that, but it was the right direction. It's much smaller, and much more... I don't think Pauline would ever get accustomed to that way of life there. And at the end, she decided not to go. And then life goes on, and Henri married and has a family of his own back there.

Oh, he married over there?

He married over there.

And he's the father of your granddaughter?

He is the father of Katrina.

Does Katrina know her father?

He held Katrina when she was tiny, tiny, when he came for them, and she almost went. He held her, but Katrina doesn't know that. It was a hard time for us. It was very traumatic.

It was very hard on the dad—much harder on him. Well, it was hard. It was a traumatic time.

How did Pauline handle this?

She was young too. She was twenty-one years old. She was very young. But she's a very strong person.

How did she feel when he left?

Well, it was mixed, I think. We went through such a tremendous... And you know, I talked to my mom, and I was fussing more than I should, and my mom told me over the phone—we talked Basque with her—but she said, "It's so much better to see them come, than to lose them." And that's the moment I woke up. To tell you the truth, when she said that, that's when I opened my eyes, and quit my whining. Because she's such a joy, she's such a blessing!

And you have a beautiful granddaughter.

She's such a beautiful [girl]. And so many nice things happen to you because of the children. We have so many nice things happen to us, because of the kids. Like I told you, those friends in Elko: we met them because [when] Eveline [was born], I had no place to leave those other two. Mary Jean came later—but that was meant to be.

And how beautiful that Pauline has a daughter.

Yes, yes. That's really a blessing for her, because they never had any... That's one sad thing. They are such nice girls. They never went out, and they never had the opportunity. They don't do 4-H or FFA (Future Farmers of America). Now, I realize

those things. At that time, it was so much easier—Well, we'll take them to school," and I took them. And for years they didn't miss a day of school. But it seemed like it was all the things we could handle. But had they done more, maybe they would have met... Because they have such a nice place to make a living here, and they have too much work. It's too much work. It's kind of sad. You should be enjoying too. Working is fine, but then it shouldn't be... And that's what I kind of feel bad about.

Well, they're young yet.

Yeah, [their time] is not up. I don't want to say it's up. A little while ago Marge told them that she was thirty-six, and Pauline said, "Oh, still time for me!"

Of course!

It would be better if they had—because it would relieve Paul of so many... And make it nice for us, and make it nice for them. But if it's meant to be, it'll happen—if it's not meant to be, we'll go on.

And then you had this joy of this new baby in the house.

Yeah.

With all these people to take care of her.

She never did miss any love. I was here the whole time, so it was kind of nice for Pauline too. You know, lots of unwed mothers have to leave their baby with somebody else. Here she was surrounded by her—she calls them "tatas," her aunts. She was one blessed little girl—and she still is a joy too.

I want to go back a little bit, because I know that Jackie is married to a doctor. Tell me when they met and when they married.

She graduated to be an R.N. (Registered Nurse), and she was pinned as a nurse. Right after her graduation, she had an interview at the Washoe Medical Center. It takes a while for them to find out, so she came home, and she was cutting hay for her dad that summer. We were making plans of emptying her apartment. She didn't know if she was going to get the job, and we were trying to decide what we would do with the furnishings and all that. One day came the call, and I know she was cutting hay, and they told me the job was hers. So I left everything, and I went to tell her right away! So she moved back to Reno in a month's time, or two months, and worked. I don't really remember how long. I think she worked about seven years. Or did she have time? See, I kind of lose track. She worked and she had her own apartment. She met her husband, Joe, at the hospital. They went [together] for a couple of years, I would say. She came with him. I remember Paul's brother and sister, and Paul's brother's wife were here visiting from France, and she came and introduced her husband, Joe, to us. Then she was married in Reno in December of 1990.

How old was she then?

If she was married in 1990—it was December 29. And she was born in 1961, so she was twenty-nine, I guess. I kind of lose track. She worked as a nurse.

Everyone liked her husband?

Yes, he's very nice, very nice. He's raised in Reno, right there. He's at home. His mom is...

She's from...Yugoslavia? Yeah, it's back there. Yugoslavia, I think. He had been married before, but had no children. After he was married to Jackie after a while, came Sophie, a year or so. Well, a year after. And she's the cutest little girl!

How old is Sophie now?

She was two in January.

So there's all girls in this family—no boys yet!

It's all girls in this family. I imagine in time Jackie will have a boy. But it is nice, because they're close enough to come see us. He's coming back Friday, Joe is. He loves fishing. Jackie says she won't be coming on this trip, but Joe is coming with a friend of his to see us.

Oh how nice! He's going fishing with a friend, she's home with Sophie.

She going to stay in Reno, she says, this time.

Do they have a house in Reno?

They have a nice home that they built together in Reno—beautiful home.

What kind of a doctor is he?

He's an anesthesiologist...

Anesthesiologist?

Yeah. I cannot say it or spell it! [laughs]

It's a hard word. No, I won't ask you to spell it?

Yeah, it's very nice, she's happy. They're close, the three. You know, they grew up

together, they had each other here. They have good times, you can tell, when they get all three. And these two, too. They go through their spats and things, but it's nice they have each other, being this kind of life and isolated. It's very, very nice that they have each other to support each other.

Now is your granddaughter already starting with ranch work, helping Pauline? Or is she a different personality?

She is a little different. Of course, she is a granddaughter, to begin with. The demands are so different now, because she wants to be with her mom and with her aunts. She likes to go riding, but nothing like when Pauline was...No, the demand is not there. She does what she's told to do, but it's altogether different.

Does she have a social life at school?

She's just a sixth-grader. She'll be much more involved, because we'll do more ourselves for her. We only let Pauline and the girls play one year of basketball, because there were practices after school, and that made a third trip and all that. And Paul was not very agreeable with those things. He felt like.

Frivolous?

Yeah. But Katrina is only a sixth-grader, and she plays basketball, she plays volleyball, and now she's in track. So she'll have more. And times are changing.

Of course.

Times are changing, and it's a different set-up for us. It's altogether different. I'm here and I'm available, and even if her mom

is working, I'm there. And we'll do all we can for her.

Do you all live in this house?

We all live in this house.

Yes, there's enough room.

Yes, we all live together. It's one family.

That's wonderful. And Paul is kind of surrounded by women?

Women! [laughs] When Jackie got married, I don't know how we came about it, but we built the guest house there with Jackie in mind, mainly. There are two spare bedrooms here, empty still, in the house. But then they're a married couple, and we do get lots of house guests, cattle buyers and friends that come to visit. It's nice to be able to have dinner and don't have to rush them out to go home. So it was one of those spur of [the moment] things. Just mention it, and they happen just like that. This friend that we met when Eveline was born was here with his wife on a visit. And it just came about. He's a contractor, so he came and built it for us.

Oh, how wonderful! The house that Jackie and her family stay in when they're here?

The one across. That's where they stay—our guest house.

Yes. And they stay there?

And they stay there.

And you've done a remodeling of the house where your helper lives?

We did that last year. Again, this friend from Elko.

I don't think many workers have a house that attractive. Very nice.

Well, it is an improvement to the ranch, and you have to do those things. It needed it.

You have one worker who lives here?

We have an Indian fellow now. A few years back, he was here for four or five years. I don't recall the dates, but it was at the time when Pauline was in high school, I imagine. He was here for five years at that time, and then he left us. He came back in January. We had a fellow that was here since he was sixteen—twenty-five years—and he left about a year ago now. He came here when he was seventeen years old, and he was here all those years. But he wanted to see...He was going on in age...Anyway, he left us, so we were alone since then—which is very nice also. Because since the beginning has always been somebody here. And we always live as one family. So we had a little time—from May until January—where it was just us. And it's kind of precious. It was nice. But we have this Indian fellow again. He's a local here and he's a nice fellow.

And he just does whatever's needed?

Yes, he does what he's told to do. He eats with us, but he lives in the house up there.

By himself?

By himself.

I just admire this very, very beautiful home that you have. It's furnished in such a creative,

artistic fashion. It reveals a lot of artistic creativity in you. So now I want to go back to when you were finally able to start to make this your home, and how did you go about it. Not just the exterior, and the wonderful furnishings, but the artwork. I'm looking at a couple of pieces of sculpture. Who is the "artist" in this house?

Well, nobody, really. It came very slowly. Until about 1965 it was very rugged. Nothing much was done. There were no demands made. We stayed and went along as we could. We had the necessities and we didn't miss anything. But then we met this friend at the birth of Eveline, and he began to come. He's Basque, and he's a country boy, and he was owner of a motel there in Elko. But livestock is in his heart—so he loved to come here. So after my parents came in 1965, and they left early 1966. Right after they left, Sauveur came and did the new kitchen for me.

But who designed it?

We did, Augustin and I.

Together?

Together. We bought the cabinets and he came. Wintertime, it's a little easier to leave the motel. He would leave his wife at the motel and come. And he installed those. It started like that—one project a year. After the kitchen was made he said, "Now you be quiet for one year." [laughs] It started like that. And too, we did lots of things little-by-little, one thing at a time. We tiled the bathroom, Paul and I, ourselves. We bought the things from Sears. By then, I knew how to order through the catalog.

Oh, okay, you didn't have to leave the house to go shop for these things?

I never went—never. Everything was bought through the catalog.

Even your kitchen?

The cabinets, Sauveur bought. But the stove and the sink and all that. The cabinets, he found them. We took the measurements and we made the design on paper. And my mom was still here. We went designing, and she was amazed. She used to tell me, “You know, I would never be able to do those things!” And I said, “If you wanted it, you would do it!” [laughs]

She saw how talented you are! Wonderful.

But we did—took the measurements and did this way. And that’s how this house became our home.

And what about these wonderful—like on the chair where you’re sifting—a woven, I guess a shawl?

It was a gift. Last Christmas, the people that run our sheep, a nice couple. They go to the national finals, and I believe it comes from...That was their Christmas. But most of the things in this house come through catalog. I never have shopped for anything: the furniture—everything.

Oh my! What about your beautiful curtains throughout the house?

Catalog. You start with a few, and pretty soon...Now we get lots of different catalogs, and I have a few that I’ve been customers with. And everything comes through the catalog.

How did you feel when they closed down the Sears catalog?

By the time... Well, we’re still with Sears, but I have so many others that I won’t miss it. But when my girls were little, I dressed them—all the school years I never went to the store. All the shopping was done at home—everything. We never went anywhere except to buy groceries, or to take the children to the doctor as they needed shots and for check-ups.

Where would that be for the doctor?

Elko.

Everything in Elko?

Ely in the beginning, with Pauline. But then I had a difficult childbirth, and things happened with the doctor where Mary Jean—not me, necessarily—I just depended on Mary Jean too. But she felt like things were not quite satisfactory, the way things happened then at that episode. There’s nobody to blame, but she felt like...And so she moved me to Elko. So we would go in the morning and come the same day, and with the babies you don’t go shopping!

No.

And with the husband I have [chuckles], you don’t go!

How long is the trip to Elko, by car?

It takes a day. It takes three hours to go, and by the time you do, three more hours. When they were little, he would ask me

to cook. He never wanted to stop in the restaurants, because he said they'll catch a cold there, there's germs there. We would cook our meals and take it with us. As they grew, you know my thing was, boy, to go to the restaurants! Then we kind of graduated a little bit. But when they were little, we only went...

Did you do all your marketing? your supplies?

In Battle Mountain. We went with the truck, and bought a pick-up full of cases of stuff. Then we lived with those. We didn't have fresh vegetables lots of times. I always had a garden, but in winter months... Now we go more, and now we have a walk-in.

A big freezer?

Two big freezers, and a walk-in where the meat stays cold, and the vegetables. We have one of those. So many improvements have been done over the years that it is a pleasure, and it gives you so much satisfaction.

Because you've done it all.

That we have gone ahead. It gives you lots of pleasure.

Well, before we end this, did I forget to ask you something important in your life that we haven't covered?

I don't see what!

Well, if you think of something, I'll be coming back in June, and we can always add to it. It's been such a wonderful, wonderful experience for me to share the wonderful life of you and

your family. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for taking the time to share all of that with us.

Thank you! Thank you to you. It's nice to remember.

Well it's just been wonderful for me. This is the end of the interview.

GRACE ERCHANDY INCHAUSPE
PHOTOGRAPHS



GRACE AND PAUL INCHAUSPE, MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

GRACE ERCHANDY INCHAUPE

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Grace Erchandy Inchauspe

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PAUL INCHAUSPE**PREFACE**

Paul Inchauspe was born in the Pyrenees, in France, in 1925. His father owned a little farm, and Paul took care of the few cows and sheep. They were very poor and when he was fourteen he went to work for others, taking care of the livestock and doing some farming until he was twenty-one. It was easy to immigrate to the United States then as long as somebody payed your way and you got a passport. Paul's mother wrote to her brother who owned a ranch in Ely, Nevada, asking if he had any work for Paul and his cousin. Paul's uncle helped them get the passports and paid for their transportation. Fifty young men traveled over together. Basques were good sheepherders and were needed in Nevada. Paul tells about their travels to New York, then to the large ranch his uncle had already developed in Ely. There Paul joined a group of Basques and describes in detail the work they had to do and how they lived. He also worked on his uncle's ranch digging irrigation ditches, planting alfalfa hay, fixing barbed wire fences,

and pumping water on the winter ranch for the cattle.

Paul tells how he leased sheep from his uncle and leased government land. He started to made good money selling wool and ewes, sending some home to help his parents. After three years, he decided to go back to the Pyrenees to live but discovered he couldn't buy any good land, and decided to look for a wife and return to Nevada. He met Grace Erchandy and she eagerly agreed to marry and return with him. She went with him to the sheep camps where she did the cooking and helped watch the sheep.

The Silver Creek Ranch where they live came up for sale that spring, 1958, and they bought it with his cousins. Paul tells of the difficult years, and how they slowly built and expanded their ranch and their livestock.

Paul and Grace have three daughters. When Pauline, the oldest daughter, started school, she didn't know a word of English because Basque was spoken in the home. Grace and the girls all went with Paul to the sheep camps, which still remain some of their

fondest memories. They started working on the ranch at a very young age. Jacqueline left to become a nurse, married and has a daughter. Pauline and Eveline are experienced in all phases of the ranching and Pauline's daughter Katrina often joins them on her own horse rounding up the cattle and helping with house and ranch chores. Paul is surrounded by a household of warm, loving women, with everyone working together with a love of their home and their land.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Paul Inchauspe at his home, at Silver Creek, Nevada May 10, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Inchauspe. I'm so pleased to be able to have an interview with you this morning. Would you please tell me your full name?

Paul Inchauspe: My name is Paul Inchauspe.

And where were you born?

I was born in [Lasses,] France, in Basque country, in the Pyrenees.

And what date was that?

It was December 11, 1925.

Would you tell us something about your grandparents? Did you know them?

No. I knew my grandmother, but grandfather was already passed away.

Did you live near your grandmother?

Yes, same town.

Can you tell me anything about her?

Well, I can't say too much about it. The only thing I knew, we used to take her, you know, one place to the other. She used to go to her—she has a few daughters around in there. And when she'd get kind of mad with one, she'd go to the other. So we used to take her on burro to the other place.

Was she your mother's mother or your father's mother?

My mother's mother. My father's, I never [knew them]—they were all passed away.

Tell me about your mother and your father.

Well my father [Jean Inchauspe], he owned that little farm in there. They got married and they raised seven kids in there.

Where were you in that seven?

I was the third one.

Tell me a little bit about what life was like for your family. Did you do sheepherding back there?

Well, yes. We had a few cows, a few sheep—a few of everything. We pretty much raised everything. But it was a small place, and we were poor. So in that time, the government didn't help anybody here, in those days. Now, they got a lot of government programs on them—the kids, you know. But them days we didn't have anything like that. We had all

kinds of bad luck and the livestock dying and all those things. Well, we were poor.

What was your day like? What kind of work did you do? What would a typical day there be like?

Well, work we do: I watch the cows, I watch the sheep, and then in the meantime we have to go to school, which I had to miss a lot of days to take care of a bunch of livestock.

Was the livestock out where you had to be out for more than a day?

Well, most of a day. You go in the morning with them, and then in the evening you bring them home. You stay there all day with them.

What was school like when you were young, back there?

School?! I liked school, but I was missing too many days, and it was hard to follow.

Oh, to catch up.

To catch up. And we had a problem in there.

When did you start to think about leaving France to come to the United States?

Well, I would work out when I was fourteen. I went to work at somebody else's place.

Back in France?

Back in France. And I'd been working there until I was about twenty-one.

What kind of work did you do?

The same thing—farming and livestock. And then when I was twenty-one, after World War II, I decided to, well, I had an uncle here in Ely.

What was your uncle's name?

Beltran Paris.

And what brought him here?

Same as I did.

Did he know anyone hers when he came?

I don't think so, no.

How did you hear about Nevada, way back there?

Well, my mother used to write the letters to her brothers and sisters. This Beltran Paris is my mother's brother.

But when he came here, he didn't know anyone here?

I don't think so. He might have some friends. He came to Wyoming the first time.

I see. Was there advertising over in France from the ranchers here?

Well, yeah. It's been since people, you know, moving here, the Basque people, they've been coming here. It was somebody from the town, always here, we knew of, and they knew of.

I see. Were there Basque boarding houses when they first arrived? I've been reading about Basque boarding houses.

They started later, yeah. Not the first ones—they didn't have no boarding houses. They were herding the sheep.

I mean, when they first arrived from France, until they got settled and went to where they wanted to go.

Yeah, well, after a few years, some of them went to cities and they started the hotels or boarding houses and stuff like that. But the first ones, I figure they didn't have any of those.

That's right. Was there an immigration problem? Or was it easy for them to come to the United States?

It was easy.

Did they have to have sponsors?

Not in those days—as long as somebody pays their way here and you get a passport, you can go. Now it's more difficult.

Who would pay their way here?

Well, when I came [chuckles], my uncle did. [laughs]

Oh, I see! If there was family or friends that would pay your way...

Yeah, most of the boys coming from over there, they didn't have no money to pay here. Somebody from here had to pay it.

I see. And then by paying your way, they helped you get the passport?

Yeah, you apply for that over there—as long as you got money to pay the way.

No problem?

No problem.

Did they have to show that you would have a way to earn a living?

No, not them days. Now, you gotta have all those, but not then.

So tell me now, when you decided to come here, did your uncle write to you and ask you to come?

Yes. Well, my mother wrote to my uncle and [asked] if he had any work for me—two boys. "Sure," he answered back, "Yes!" Myself and my cousin, we both came.

Who were the parents of your cousin?

My mother's sister's boy.

How old were you?

I was twenty-one.

And how old was your cousin?

Same age, twenty-one.

And what was your cousin's name?

Jean Legarto.

Well that was nice to have company to travel together.

Oh yes! We had company. We were fifty boys coming over, all full of play.

Was that because other people...

Yeah, other places, everywhere: California, Wyoming, Colorado—everyplace.

Did the fifty come from your town?

Well, the same area there, the Pyrenees, Basque country.

Now who arranged for all of these others?

Well, there's gents over there—they filled up all the papers and the stuff you know.

Was there someone there helping you to come because they needed workers?

Well, yeah. They needed herders. That's the main thing. We came here to herd sheep.

Was it a company that went over there?

No, no, no, no—each had their own. Like I had my uncle. And they had some friend or some relative here with the sheep.

I see, and they knew they needed helpers.

Yeah.

Is that because the Basques were so good at sheepherding?

Yeah, that's the main thing. [laughs]

But not many in this country?

No, not now. There aren't any now.

None?

No.

Well, that must have been exciting. Tell me how it felt to leave home and go so far away.

Well, it was kind of lonesome—I can tell you that—the first couple of years. Then after that, you get used to it, and no problem. But the first couple of years was kind of bad. If I'd had a way to go back, [I'd have gone]. [laughs]

But you didn't have the money?

Yeah.

Let's go back to when you were going to travel. Describe to me the trip, from the time you left your house until... Where did you first go?

Well, to Paris. We took a plane from Paris and came to New York.

So you didn't have to come on the boat, like the early people?

Oh no! we came on the airplane. I've never been on a boat. Already, the planes were flying—not the jets, but those others. But anyway, we came to New York. From New York, I know I ended up in Elko, but how we got through Salt Lake [and so on], I don't remember that.

What did it feel like when you landed in this huge city of New York?

Well [chuckles], we had a problem there. We got a taxi and they took us to the Basque hotel. There was a Basque hotel there.

Okay, that's what I wanted to know about.

Yeah, there was a Basque hotel there. We stayed there overnight.

Tell me what that was like.

Well, everything was alright. We were a bunch of boys, and we were happy to be here.

And they were all speaking your language at the hotel?

Oh, speaking Basque, yeah—and French. New York, anyway, we got in the hotel, and that hotel manager came out, and right away he asked us how much we paid the taxi. And the taxi [driver] tried to rob us. So he got whistling, he stopped it and got the money back. We figured, “This is the United States, huh?!” [laughs]

Do you remember where that hotel was?

No. It was in New York. I even forget the name of the hotel, but it was Spanish Basque.

Yeah, I read about some of those. Alright, then they flew you to...

From there we started...

By plane?

Yeah, myself and my cousin, [flew] to Elko. That’s where we split: some went one way, others went another way. We landed in Elko.

Is that where your uncle was, in Elko?

He was in Ely, but the airplane didn’t go to Ely. And then we stayed there in the hotel maybe two or three days.

Was that a Basque hotel in Ely?

Uh-huh.

Okay. Was it a hotel or a house?

A hotel, another hotel.

Another one run by Basques?

Yeah.

So you were still comfortable.

Oh yes! Yes, yes.

How long did you stay in that hotel?

About three days.

Did you get to look around town?

Yeah, we went around a little bit. We didn’t go too far, though. [chuckles] Anyway, then my uncle came to pick us up.

Oh, with a car?

With a pick-up, yeah.

How long had it been since you had seen your uncle?

Well, that’s the first time I d seen him.

Oh!

I didn’t know him. He was here before I was born.

Oh my! So he was here a long time.

Oh yeah.

Did he come here when he was about your age?

About the same age, about twenty-two, something like that.

Now, did he speak Basque to you?

Oh yes! [laughs] That's all we knew!

Was that a strange feeling, coming to a country with such a difficult language here?

Yeah, it was, but he took us to the sheep camp there, and he had a bunch of Basque people already working in there. So I didn't know any difference. And then I had two cousins, my uncle's two sons, here, and they spoke a little Basque. So I didn't have any problem. So then I started picking up a little English with them.

Now, when you arrived in Elko, describe what it was like when you first arrived. Was it his ranch, or was he working on a ranch for someone else?

My uncle? It was his ranch. He already had everything. He had sheep and cattle.

Did he own the property?

He owned the property.

How big a ranch was that?

Well, I don't know how many acres—I think there was about 5,000-6,000 acres.

Oh, a huge one!

Well, yes. And he ran about 7,000-8,000 sheep and about 500 head of cattle. And we were a bunch of boys working in there. In fact, one time we had about eight or ten of them.

Describe for me—because everyone doesn't know what it is like to be a shepherd—one full day from the time you woke up, what you did.

Well, first, he was still lambing at that time—it was in May, May 18, I got there. And they had to leave a bunch of sheep still lambing yet, “droppers” they call it. So he put me with that bunch. They gave me the sheep hook and they gave me a horse. And every time a ewe had a problem, I had to catch it and make the lamb suck, or pull the lamb, or something like that. I'll never forget the first one! The horse, he was already used to it, to follow the sheep and I'd never been riding horses. So the horse went one way, and I went the other! [laughter] So I learned the lesson well. “Next time I'm going to follow the horse!” So I caught the sheep and tied it up to a bush, and made the lamb suck and stuff. And then I had another guy, older guy, who was here a long time—he followed behind to check what I did. You've got to go back two or three times to the same ewe, and things like that. Anyway, then he said, “Well, you're doing pretty good.” So I was glad! We used to get up at three o'clock in the morning, and they had the cook in there, an old guy. He was Basque too. He cooked breakfast at three o'clock in the morning: I couldn't eat breakfast! [laughs]

What did he cook for breakfast?

Well, ham and eggs, and of course some hotcakes. And hotcakes, I never liked them anyway! Anyway, I couldn't eat breakfast. I'd have some coffee and bread and go.

Did you take some food with you?

No. And then at noon, somebody came to replace you for lunchtime. I'd go to camp

and eat the lunch and then go back and stay until dark, with [the sheep].

What kind of housing did you live in?

Well, we had sheep camps, kind of trailers.

In other words, you were away from the main house, out on the range?

Oh yeah, we were out on the range.

How long would you be out on the range?

Well, it lasted about forty days, two months.

Really?!

Lambing time. And then, after you get through lambing, you put a thousand ewes together in a band, then you go in a tent, up in the hills. You can't take the trailers up there.

Oh, so you slept in tents?

Oh yeah!

Was it springtime? Was it cold?

Summertime. Wintertime, we had the trailers. But in the spring and summer we go up in the hills with the sheep, so you can't take trailers up there, so we had to use the tents.

How many were there in your group?

Yourself.

You were by yourself?

Well, you take a band, you're all alone.

That's why they brought Basques here!

[laughs] Yeah!

You were all alone!

All alone. The camp tender used to come every six days, to bring groceries.

You cooked yourself?

You cooked yourself.

How did you cook?

In a Dutch oven.

How does that work?

Good! You can cook good in it.

You made a fire?

Fire. And you can make a hole in the ground and put some kind of bar on top and put the Dutch oven in there and cook in that.

What did you cook?

[chuckles] Meat and potatoes. We used to make bread ourself too, under the ground.

Oh! But that was such a lonely life. What did you do?

Well, yeah, it is lonely. I didn't like it. I had to do something. You've gotta stay there—there isn't much work, but staying there, it's lonesome. That's a problem with a sheepherder.

Oh! Now was this when the sheep were giving birth to the lambs? They were breeding and

giving birth to the lambs. Is that what this whole time period. .

No, that only lasted forty days—two months at the longest. Then the rest of the time, it's a different way, different way to handle the sheep.

Did you have to help with any of the births of the lambs if they had trouble?

Quite a few.

Did you ever do it before you came here?

Oh yeah, I did it in the old country.

What did you do?

We used to milk sheep over there. I milked a lot of sheep in the old country.

Oh really?! Now I heard that sometimes the lonely sheepherders did a lot of tree carvings.

[laughs] Yeah!

Did you do carvings?

Not too much, no. Well, I've been kind of lucky myself: I didn't have to herd the sheep too long. My uncle took me on the ranch and I worked on the ranch—which I liked a lot better!

How long did you do the sheep herding?

Well, just the lambing time, maybe two months in the spring.

But how many years did you do that?

Oh, I did it nine years.

But then the rest of the year you did the ranching?

Ranching.

Where did you live when you were doing the ranching?

Well, we had a boarding house on the ranch right there, in the house.

In your uncle's house, or a different house?

In my uncle's house.

With your cousins?

Well my cousins, most of them were herding sheep. But those two sons of his and myself were on the ranch.

Okay, you got special treatment. [laughs]

Yeah, special. I'm going to tell you: I never forget, I kind of watched that time. My uncle came to pick us up in Elko, like I said. And then he had to take us to the sheep camp. So anyway, he had a ditch—the water ran in a ditch—and one place was washed out. So he had two shovels in the pick-up, and so he said, "Well, you guys fill this up." And he gave us—both cousins—a shovel, and he watched us to see which could handle a shovel best. So he was going to take that one to the ranch! [chuckles] So I guess I was doing better, so I ended up going to the ranch, and the other one had to go herd sheep—which he was jealous all along, me being on the ranch and he being a sheepherder. So anyway, we went like that about five years. And then we leased the sheep from our uncle.

Alright, let's back up just a little bit. When you were doing the ranching—because some of us

don't know what that means—I want you to tell me right from the start, over one or two days, the kind of work you did on that ranch when you were there.

Well, irrigating. That's in the summertime, you know.

And how did you irrigate?

With a shovel there, and you'd change water from one place to another.

Were those irrigation pipes on wheels?

No, no, no. That's floating. We didn't have any pipelines.

So how did you irrigate?

With the shovel. You got the water running in the ditch, and you've got to break the ditch and make the water go a lot of different places.

So you had to dig ditches to get the water...

The ditch was already there, but you break the ditch...

How do you break the ditch?

With a shovel. You make a little crack, so the water will...

And where did the water come from?

From the mountains.

Oh, like the snow melting, or creeks?

Yeah, it was creek water.

What was planted? Alfalfa?

Alfalfa and grass hay.

Then what else did you do?

Then we go riding in the fall and fixed the fences. That's ranch work, you know. Every day it's a different...

What kind of fences? Were they wooden?

Wire fences, barbed wire. Pump water in the wintertime for the calves, in what they call the winter ranch. I had to stay in the cabin that time, and from the well, you pump water. That was lonesome too, stay in there all day long.

How far away from the ranch house?

About twenty miles.

And how long would you stay there?

All depends. When it snows, then we let them go in the snow. But if it didn't snow until later, I had to stay there until then: maybe two or three months in the fall.

Was that pumping water for the animals?

For the cows.

Tell me some of the other things that you did on the ranch.

Well, that's what we did. In the summertime we'd hay—get in the hay. Already then, there were some balers and stuff—we didn't pitchfork any hay. We used to bale it.

Bale it by hand?

No, machine. Then you pick up the bales by hand. But we used to cut hay with a team, used horses. They didn't have no tractors then.

Oh, a lot of hard work!

Yeah. Well, I liked it. It's slow going, but... And it was a small outfit anyway. Lots of people working. We had the cook in there, in the camp. We called it the camp—we were out there in the field. He cooked good, so we ate good.

Would you be alone again, or with someone else doing that? Or still all alone, when you were out in the camp?

Oh no, we had a bunch of people. We were a bunch in there, maybe five or six of them.

Did you communicate with your family? Did you write?

I used to write once in a while, yes.

Did they write to you?

Oh yeah. In the beginning, we were writing pretty often. Then less, less, less.

Did anyone else from your family come over?

Later, my brother came—one brother. That was 1951. Then he was about nineteen years old, and he had to go back to the Service. They called him back, so he went back. And then he had to go to Algeria in the war and all that—after nine months he was here. We felt pretty bad about that, but anyway he got okay. And then when I went back in 1957, he decided to come back here with me.

Oh he did? Oh, good.

So he spent about five years or so here.

You started to tell me about after a while you leased your own sheep. Was that before you went back home?

Yes.

Tell me about that.

That was in 1953. I took part of it, and my cousins—we were already four cousins then. They took the other part.

The other part of what?

The outfit, the sheep. We split the sheep from our uncle—we split it. I wanted my own—the other three, they went together.

Did you have to buy land?

No, no, we were on a lease—we didn't buy anything.

Oh, in other words was that the government land?

It was government land, as it is now.

Okay, so if you leased sheep, describe what that means, when you lease sheep and you lease land.

The sheep belonged to my uncle. We leased them from my uncle, and we had to give him so much a person, which was, we had to give three pounds wool from each ewe, and 30 percent of the lamb drop, the lambs and the ewes. But the amount of ewes we took...

Oh, the ewes, you had to give him some?

Thirty percent lambs, and three pounds of wool on each ewe.

Was it financially worthwhile? I don't understand how you could lease and give him that much. How much could you make?

Well, we made good money!

Tell me how.

Well, wages in them days, we were getting about \$200 a month, working for my uncle. After I leased the sheep, I cleared about \$5,000-\$6,000 a year.

Was that from selling the wool?

Well, yeah, that was my part there, the lease. I had to give three pounds wool, but still, the ewe, the sheep, will shear about ten pounds. So I had seven pounds.

Oh! Now who did you sell that wool to?

Well, to wool buyers—it went to the market, whoever.

Where were the wool markets?

Salt Lake was one outfit. Another one in San Francisco. They buy the wool—different buyers, whoever gives you more.

Is it auction, or do they just come and offer?

No, no, they offer you the price, and you try the other guy too, and which one gives you most.

I see. So you would bring the wool?

Yeah.

Did you also bring any... You only brought the wool?

No, no, I had that wool, and then the lambs.

Oh, the young lambs you sold.

The lambs, I had to give 30 percent—a hundred ewes, thirty lambs. And the rest were mine.

And then you sold them?

I sold them. And that's how you made your money. I had to make expenses—all the shearers' wages and all that. But still, I tripled wages being on the lease. [He earned three times as much on the lease as he did working for wages.] So after three years, I thought I had pretty good—you know, I made good money—about \$35,000. That was pretty good money for those days!

Well, you didn't spend money anywhere!
[laughs]

No. But first—I want to go back—the first three years I sent a lot of money home to my parents. They rebuilt the house—it was about ready to fall down. So I paid for that.

What a good son!

And after five years, I didn't have too much money—I sent it over there. So anyway, then after that, that's when I started making... One brother, I helped him too. I sent a thousand dollars cash inside a letter in hundred-dollar bills, and never lost any! [The exchange rate at that time was] 300 francs [per 100 dollars]. He got 300,000 francs from my \$1,000 here. I had to borrow that from my uncle, because I was

only here two months. So my uncle loaned me that money, so I sent it to my brother to help, because I didn't want to see him paying any interest in borrowing the money [in France]. So I started from there. And then later my oldest brother, he was home, and [he told me], "We gotta rebuild the house." So I sent the money.

Oh, you were so good!

I don't know exactly how much, but about \$6,000-\$7,000, which was a lot of money at that time.

Now, when you leased your own sheep, did you still live in your uncle's house?

Pretty much. In the wintertime, I followed the sheep with the sheepherder and stayed in the camps—well, what we called a "camp." It's a trailer house, really.

And a tent in the summer?

A tent in the summer.

Now in the trailer house, were you alone then too?

Well, I had the sheepherder with me.

How many did you hire?

Three. I had three guys.

Were they young men that you knew?

They were Basque that came from over there. Them days, they were coming pretty often.

When you were there with the sheepherders, did you do anything like play cards or have any kind of amusement?

Oh yeah!

Tell me what you did.

We had a radio. We played cards and things like that. And then there were a lot of other outfits close to you, and we'd visit back and forth and things like that.

Did someone bring a little liquor ever, so you could have a drink?

Well, yeah, we always had some wine, you know.

What kind of music did you like to play on the radio?

Well, western.

Western music?!

Oh yeah! we were cowboys! [laughter] We were sheepherders and cowboys—western, yeah.

Did you wear the Levis and the cowboy hat?

Levis, oh yeah.

Boots?

Boots, yeah.

Do you have any pictures of yourself in those days?

Oh, my goodness. I'm sure there are some, somewhere here.

I'd like to see that. Now, I know that you said then you went back home. Tell me about that.

Well, in three years, I left the sheep back to my uncle, and that was in 1957. So I went back and figured, well, I'll try to buy something over there and get started over there.

You thought you might go back and live over there?

And live over there, yes. But then I found out—I spent nine months there—and I found out something to buy wasn't in the right places, and something good wasn't for sale. So I figured, well, I'd better get the hell out of here. [laughs] So I started looking for a wife.

Oh, that's a good idea!

The first four or five months, I just couldn't buy. So then I thought, "Well, I got to do something here: get out of here." So I started looking. After we met, about three months, we got married.

Okay, now let's go into detail. Where did you meet Grace?

Alright, it was pretty much the same area there. My brother—the one that came here, the younger one—had a girlfriend, and she and my wife were girlfriends. So we knew each other from there, and started from there. We'd double date! [laughs]

You were both dating, double dating, at the same time?

Pretty much.

Tell me what dating there was like.

[laughs] Well, like everywhere else! We had it pretty easy—we had the car.

You had a car there?

I had a car then, yeah. There wasn't too many cars in them days, you know. You go there with a car, it's easy to date! [laughter]

Now, when you went back, thinking you were going to stay, you bought a car?

No, I bought the car right in the beginning.

Right in the beginning?

Yeah, I didn't want to walk in there, you know. I thought I had pretty good money [chuckles] so I figured I'd better have a car.

What kind of a car?

It was a Renault, French.

Oh, a French car. Then did you then decide you were going to come back with a wife?

Yeah.

What did Grace think?

She was happy to come. And she's been happy ever since. I didn't have any problem. She liked it, and wherever I go, she'll go—no problem.

Oh, that's wonderful. Well, because you're such a nice person!

[laughs] Yeah, she's pretty good.

When you came here, did you fly again, to New York?

Yes, we did. We came over the North Pole.

And where did you land?

North Pole once, and then Los Angeles.
And from Los Angeles, we flew to Ely.

Back to your uncle's place?

Uh-huh.

And then what did you do?

Well, we went there, my brother and his wife,
my wife and myself. We worked for him, which
was lambing time again, the end of March. So we
went through the lambing there, helped them.

And the wives were left back at the house?

No, my wife came with me in the camp.

Oh, came to the camp with you?!

Oh yeah, she cooked for us.

Oh! And did your brother's wife go too?

No, he went to the other part. So where I
had the sheep leased, I went to that end, and
my brother went to the other end.

Did his wife go with him?

No. They had a cook there anyway. My
cousin already had his wife in there. We were
a big bunch, you know!

*I see. So when Grace went with you, did you
sleep in these tents and trailers?*

No, not the tents—we sleep in a trailer.

Was it just you and Grace, or were you near others?

No, we had two sheepherders there in
camp.

So you had a little group there.

Oh yeah.

Did Grace do some of the work too?

She cooked.

Oh, she did the cooking for you.

Yeah. In fact, we had two trailers: the
herders stayed in one trailer, and we stayed
in the other.

*So that was nicer than being out there atone—
much better.*

Oh yes! And then this place here came
up for sale that same spring, June. So we
bought this and we moved here on June 18,
[1958].

*Did you buy it just the two of you, or with your
cousins?*

With my cousins.

All of you bought this ranch?

Two cousins—they were born here—they
two and myself.

Was it as big as it is now, when you bought it?

No. No, we've tripled it since.

How many acres when you bought it?

It was about 3,000 acres we bought at that
time. Now we've got about 10,000 acres.

*Where did you all live? Was there a house here
already?*

We lived in this house.

This house was here.

Yeah.

Did you all live in the same house? Your cousins?

No, no, my cousins, they didn't follow me here—they stayed in Ely. They were partners, but they never came here.

Oh, I see, just the two of you ran it.

Yeah, Grace and myself.

So tell me, when you first moved here, what it was like? Were the animals here already, or did you bring your own animals? How did you start?

The animals were here.

You bought the animals and the land?

Yeah, which was about 4,500 sheep.

Oh, mainly sheep?

Four thousand, five hundred sheep and about 1,100 cows. So we started with them. That was in 1958. Then came a big drought in 1958-1959. So we sold most of our cows.

Ah, because it was hard to get water and take care of them?

Yeah, and then we had to make a payment, so we paid the biggest part of it, and that saved us. Good thing we did that, otherwise I don't think we'd be here today.

Oh, did some of the animals die?

Well, not die, but they would cost to feed, you know. In the meantime we had to make interest and the payments and all that, see.

Oh my, so it was tough period.

You bet, that first year was bad—the first two years.

Did you then do all the work yourselves?

We had some hired people, not too many. We couldn't afford it! We went as cheap as we could, you know, to run it, and stay in the business. Well, anyway, we sold those cows and that helped. We paid pretty good money, so we got the interest down, and all that—which after that, still, we owed \$200,000, and we had to make \$20,000 principal a year, plus interest.

How did you do that?

Well, we made it. We never borrowed the money.

You just lived very carefully?

Yeah. I've never been in the bank. Between my cousins and myself, we had enough down to put them in there, which was \$100,000 down. And then we got \$200,000 from the cows after we sold them, so the whole deal was \$500,000, we bought for. So we got down to \$200,000, which took us—supposed to be ten years to pay—we paid in the first five years.

Were there at that time any low-interest government loans?

Well [chuckles] the interest, I think, was about 5 percent, even then.

Was it a government loan?

No, no, no. I didn't know what a government loan was. It was the bank. Like I said, though, I didn't borrow the money. See, the guy who owned the place, we made the payments to him not the bank.

Oh, maybe he had the first loan.

Well, probably, yeah. When we started, probably he had it. But see, everything we bought, we bought it like that, from the owner before—we make the payments to him. And so after we bought the other places the same way, we had the down payment already, so then he took the payments from there, so much a year and so much interest. And you come up with that payment or you lose the place. But we've been doing good ever since. We made the payments every year. So like I was telling you, I never went to the bank to borrow money.

So how did you start to build the business after those first very difficult years?

Well, slow, slow, slow.

How?

We sold the cows then, but then we raised the heifer calves and what we had. We kept about 150 head and started with them—a few every year, a few heifers, and build them up. It took years to build up the outfit.

Now, are these cattle that are slaughtered for meat?

Yes, they were beef.

How do you sell them?

Well, like the [sheep], whoever gives you the most.

Do they come to you?

They come to you. Usually in the fall—that's when the calves are ready. So they know, and they'll call you. And we used to contact them three months ahead, too.

Okay, so you contact the big meat plants?

Some of the traders. They're buying and selling, buying and selling.

So you let them know what you have, and they come.

Yeah. We ship them right here. Then it's up to them. We've got the scales here, and we weigh them right here, and he pays them right there.

He brings his great big truck or something?

He brings the trucks, and that's it. We don't worry after that.

Is that the main way you make your income? from the animals?

Well, yeah. At least it's clear, you know what you're going to get. You do that right here—if you don't like it, you don't take it. But you send them to someplace, then they're the ones that take care of everything. So we don't like that. So we gotta sell it right here and get it over with.

And then with the sheep, you sold the wool the way you were telling me, and the lambs?

Yeah. And the lambs the same way.

That's the main income from running the ranch?

Yeah, that's the income: the calves and the lambs. And then in the meantime, you gotta keep replacing so many of them every year—to replace dead losses and stuff like that.

And then how do you do that?

Well, you figure you raise so many of them, and sell the rest.

I heard there's some controversy between cattle and sheep grazing the same land. Tell me about it.

Well, cow men, they don't like the sheep in there, but myself, I'm going to tell you that cows and sheep, they belong together. There's nothing wrong to run them together. But cowboys and sheepherders, they've always been fighting.

Why?

Well, the sheepherder is there, and the cow man, he don't like the sheep and they call them "stinking sheep," and all that. That's not true. They get along fine, cows and sheep. And they belong together—any kind of animals belong together.

I heard that some say the sheep eat the grass down to the bottom and then the cattle doesn't have any.

No, that's the other way around! Sheep will never eat the grass all the way down.

They're too picky. Sheep like leaves more than anything else. The grass, certain times of the year, they don't even touch the grass.

So you haven't had any problems with having both?

No, we've been running both of them, and I don't see any trouble. But now it's different. Now everybody gets along better. We've got more problem now with city people than between neighbors!

Like what?

Well, they don't want no livestock on public land.

Why?

Well, I don't know. That's the question: Why? They don't realize where their food comes from, and they're trying to kick all the ranchers off the public land. We're fighting them pretty bad right now.

What do they want to do with that land?

Well, they want to leave it for wildlife and stuff—deer. So they don't want no livestock, they don't want no cattle, they don't want no sheep.

Oh my!

They're pushing it pretty hard, too. Which is, you know, bad in country like this. So I don't know how we're going to end up. There's been a drought the last six or seven years, the country is not in the best shape. They blame us for ruining the country. Which, you know, we're not ruining the country—it's Mother Nature. But they're coming up with all kinds

of excuses, trying to kick us out. And BLM (the Bureau of Land Management), they're following their regulations. Right now they cut us about 50 percent, on the permit on public land, which is a big cut. We're going to have to reduce the livestock number down. That's going to be bad. You've got the same expenses, you know, and then you've got less livestock in there. Something has to pay the expenses. And we're going to spend just as much or more with a lot fewer livestock. So that's going to hurt us.

Now, you started to say you expanded your land. Tell me when you started to expand your original ranch.

Well, the first time, I think it was in 1968—we bought another place here. We split the outfit with another guy from Elko. Down below here we call it the Racetrack.

Now, were your cousins still...

Yeah, they were still on. I'll come to that later. In 1968, that was The first time we bought the extra. So then we bought another place on the Grass Valley side here too. That was in 1967 or something like that. Anyway, in 1968, this bought here. And then in 1973 we bought the rest of our outfit in there, and we sold what we had in Grass Valley and bought another outfit, a ranch here we call the Iowa Canyon.

Was it all adjoining land?

That's all adjoining, yeah.

The Iowa Canyon was in 1973, and ever since, we've been on this. And then—I can't tell you exactly what year it was—we bought out the partners. That was four years ago,

which is 1988, something like that. Then since then we've been ourselves.

Oh, so you bought out their share?

Uh-huh.

And what were they doing, ranching somewhere else?

They got their own place from my uncle. They're still there, both brothers.

Oh, your uncle died?

He passed away.

I see, and they have that ranch.

He was ninety-three when he passed away, about five years ago or so. He used to come here a lot and visit. He'd stay a few days and then go back. But they never did anything here.

You did all the work?

Yeah, ever since we were alone.

They were silent partners?

Silent partners, yeah. They didn't bother us and we didn't bother them. Finally they decided they wanted to sell their share, so we bought it. They owned half, and then I owned the other half. So we bought them out.

This is one of the most beautiful areas that I've seen here.

We like it here.

It's beautiful.

We did a lot of work fixing the place here.
Now it's nice.

Now let's talk a little bit about your daughters.

Well, my daughters, they've been good.
They work hard.

Let's go back to when your first daughter was born, and tell me what that was like.

In 1959. In fact, we have the same birthday.

Really?! You and your oldest daughter?

Uh-huh.

Which one is your oldest daughter?

Pauline. Yeah, December 11.

What a big celebration you must have!

Yeah. I took Grace to Ely to have her baby, the day before. I think it was about December 9, and I said, "You keep it until the eleventh." She kept it alright—she had to have a Caesarean! She couldn't have it. So on the eleventh, in the morning, they had the Caesarean. So we have the same birthday.

And then when was your second daughter born?

About two years later. So about 1961. [Born October 3, 1961.]

And what is her name?

Jacqueline.

And then you have a third daughter, I believe.

Eveline [born September 1, 1964].

That was a busy time.

Busy time. And she [Grace] used to come in the sheep camp, lambing too, and cook. Three little kids in there.

All three little kids and Grace?

Oh yeah.

So they grew up with that.

They grew up with it, oh yeah.

Oh, what a wonderful wife, to do that!

Yeah. The kids liked it there: they'd play in the mud out there in the camp. They liked it.

Did you have a trailer?

A trailer, yeah.

Did Pauline, the oldest one, start real early, working?

Well, both of them, same age. They were tiny and we used to have a big mule. One gets on top of the other one and leads the mule around. They go hours and hours. Finally, the mule gets tired and he'll go in the barn door and stay there. [chuckles] And they couldn't make him go nowhere! They'd talk to each other, "Dumb mule," the two oldest ones, you know.

What were some of the first chores that you assigned to them?

Well, they'd pick up the eggs.

You had chickens?

Oh yeah, we always had chickens. And then feed the leppie lambs, and stuff like that.

Did they ever have to feed them with a bottle when they were too young?

Oh yeah, the little tiny. They've got the pictures too, a lot of them here somewhere.

Oh good. I'll bet they loved that.

Yeah. Still, that Eveline, she's an animal lover. She likes them right now too. She's got a little lamb in there, she keeps in her arms like that. It's kind of sick, anyway, that lamb. And she's trying to save it. I told her, "He's going to die." She said, "No, no, no, no, he'll come out." I don't know, yesterday it was almost dead. So I hope it goes out, though.

So when did you start taking them out on real ranch work? How old was Pauline?

Pauline was probably seven or eight years old when she started riding the horse with us out there. And ever since. The others, the same way.

Did you make sure they went to school?

Oh yes! Pauline, she didn't go to college, but the other two did.

But she had her education with you!

[chuckles] Yeah. Well, the three of them graduated a year early.

Oh, smart!

We are about twenty-five miles here from the school, and it was a lot of driving. Pauline, she started driving to school when she was thirteen. Until then, Grace had to take them every day.

Oh my! How did Grace learn to drive?

Driving here, and I teach her here. And then they give her a special permit to 90 to school and back.

You mean Pauline?

Pauline, yes.

So she was how old?

Thirteen.

And she took the other children?

Took the other two with her. And then Jacqueline, she came the same way. About the time she [Pauline] was ready to quit, Jacqueline was the same way, so she drove. And then Eveline, we didn't have to take them after that. Until then, Grace had to go twice a day, every day.

Was that into Austin?

Austin, which was a hundred miles a day.

Oh my!

She goes in the morning, that's twenty-five miles one way. And go and then come back, in the afternoon go get them, so it's fifty miles a

trip. Making a hundred miles a day, every day. Still, we're doing that today.

Who's going?

Katrina is going.

And who is Katrina?

Pauline's daughter.

Oh, Pauline has a daughter?

Uh-huh.

Okay, she lives here?

Oh yes. She's twelve years old.

Is she also learning ranching?

Oh yes! She's learning how to drive too now. Pretty soon she's going to start to do the same thing.

So they give a special permit?

They give a special permit to drive to school and back.

What happens in winter with this bumpy road?

Well, if it gets real bad, then we drive them there.

Are there ever days when they just can't go because it's so bad?

No, not too many days, no. They plow the highway pretty often, and it's no problem. Right now, we got the place right by the school

there, maybe two miles or so, so we're there pretty much back and forth anyway.

Now, there's one daughter that doesn't live here.

No, she's in Reno. In fact, they were here this weekend.

For Mothers' Day?

Uh-huh.

Tell me about her.

She went to school and college here in Reno, and got a nursing degree. And she nursed there for quite a few years. And then she got married and married a doctor. Now they've got a daughter two years old. She doesn't work any more—she takes care of the kid.

And you see them frequently?

Pretty much, yeah.

So she was the only one who didn't take to the ranching?

Yeah, she wasn't too much of a rancher.

She's a little different.

Yeah. She works alright, but she was more of a "city girl." And she graduated a year early. She went to college before she was seventeen.

Oh, so very bright.

She was young. We should have kept her here one more year. It was pretty sad when she wasn't here. She was kind of young. She

started a year early, besides, and graduated a year early. So she was sixteen when she went to college.

Oh my! Really bright children. I see you have a little house here for when they come?

Oh yeah, we call that the guest house.

How often do they come?

Well, it depends. Sometimes they come every fifteen days or a month. It all depends, you know.

Do you ever go and visit them?

We do, yeah.

Do you leave the ranch once in a while?

Well, once in a while, yeah. [laughs] Sure. Oh yeah. For one day.

What do you do on that one day?

Well, we leave the ranch for one day. Like, we go to Reno, the same day, we come back.

Do you do your shopping there while you're there?

Not in Reno too much. We go to Elko to shop. And we don't go shopping too often. We get a bunch of groceries when we go, and you don't have to go for three months. We've got pretty much everything right here.

What do you have here besides the chickens and the eggs?

Well, we've got the meat.

Oh, that's right. You butcher for yourselves?

We butcher for ourselves.

Do you have a big freezer? Your own deep freezer?

We've got freezers.

Big ones?

Big ones, a couple of them.

You'll have to show me after. Who butchers?

I butcher, Pauline has butchered.

What do you do?

We do the lambs mostly. Once a year we buy a bunch of hogs and we cure the ham.

And do you grow vegetables?

Vegetables in the summertime. In the wintertime, we use the canned vegetables.

Oh, so you buy a whole big stock of them?

Yeah, buy the cases. In the summer, we raise green beans and lettuce and carrots and all those things right in the garden.

And then do you can them?

Well, not really. We do some. [laughs] We waste a lot of time!

Through the years, when your family was growing up, did you speak Basque in the family?

Yes.

Where does the Basque language come from? I know it's different from any other language, isn't it?

Well, I can't tell you that.

Is it a mixture?

Nobody knows.

Is it a mixture of French and Spanish? Or is it entirely different?

It's entirely different, Basque is. Nobody knows where it comes from.

And it's only in that small region that they speak that?

Yeah.

How big an area is it where the Basques come from, the Pyrenees?

I'll say it's like the state of Nevada, maybe smaller—Spain and France both together. That was one nation at one time. And Spain and France had a war between them, and they split the Basque.

So some are in Spain and some in France?

Some in Spain and some in France. Spain, in fact, I think has got more area than France.

But the Basque people still speak their own language in those countries?

Pretty much, yeah. Spain tried to push it out of there, because they've been in the civil

war and all that. According to them, they didn't like the Basque people. But now I heard they're coming back again. And in France too, they were ashamed to speak Basque: the younger people switched to French. We wasn't allowed to speak Basque in school.

Really?!

No, we had to speak French.

So you know French.

Yeah, pretty much. I've kind of forgot now, but my wife, she does good.

Is there any similarity between French and Basque?

No, no, no, it's altogether different. In fact, the Basque is so confusing, a lot of people speak different.

Oh, even within the Basque?

In the Basque itself. You try to learn by hearing, you'll never get nowhere! One person will tell you one way, the other one will tell you the other way, the same stuff. So you'll get confused.

Do you still speak Basque within your family?

My wife and myself, we do quite a bit.

What about your daughters?

We speak English. When Pauline started going to school, she didn't know a word of English.

Really?!

And then after that, we started speaking English with them. Now, I don't know why, but they understand. Pauline speaks good Basque. Eveline understands everything, so does Jacqueline.

It's good to know a couple of languages.

Well, there's nothing wrong with that. Now, I can't even speak the Basque to them. Then, talking with my wife, Grace, we switch to Basque. They follow it anyway. So...

One of the things I read about that I wanted to ask you about are the problems with the mustangs, the wild horses. Have you ever had any problems with them?

Well, problems yeah.

Tell me what.

They're using a lot of grass.

Oh, they come and eat the...

What we're supposed to get for our livestock. We've got thousands of them around.

How did so many accumulate?

Well, nobody manages them any more, so they're raising the colts every year and increasing.

And they're just wild? Nobody owns them?

Nobody owns them. They're wild and they're worthless.

And they just come around eating all the grass?

They do a lot of damage out there.

So does anyone round them up? Or what happens?

Nobody is allowed to touch them. The government's in charge of them. And the BLM, every time they start rounding up a bunch somewhere, the public starts jumping in the lawsuit [threatens to sue them], and they stop them. It's a big war between them. That's when they're raising hell. They're trying to manage everything here. And a lot of them come from the East—New York and those people.

Do they own the land?

They don't own anything!

Are there many wild horses around now on the lands where your sheep and cattle are?

Yes, it's quite a few. I would say maybe out of our allotment—we call it our allotment. . .

What do you call it?

Our allotment. We get allotments. Each rancher gets their own allotment.

Gets an allotment of land?

From BLM. And we fence-in and all that. I figure we've got over 1,500 head of horses here.

Do you have to put up your own fences on the area that they loan you?

We maintain them fences. Most of them, we have to pay the labor to build the fence up.

BLM furnished the material, and then now we've got to maintain them—which we've got hundreds of miles.

Oh my! And what do you do about the water?

Water, we've got to pump our own water. BLM doesn't...

How do you bring your own water there?

Well, we drill the wells.

Oh, you have to do that? You have to drill the wells and bring your own water?

Yeah, do your own water. Most of it is springs and stuff. They're already on private grounds. They've been taken before. They used to buy forty acres, wherever is near a spring or something. And we've got a lot of those forty acres scattered like that out in the country.

Tell me how do you drill for a well.

Well, there are some people who do that. They've got big huge equipment. You call them up, and they come. They're expensive, but they'll drill the well, and it all depends how far they gotta go. Sometimes you gotta go—we got some wells 500 feet deep. Some others, say, 100, 200, like that. So if you're lucky, you hit it soon.

Does the drought affect it? or not?

Well, not the water. So far, they stay in there as they are. We've never had a dry well yet. But a lot of the springs dry up, yes.

How do you get the water from the well for the animals?

Well, we pump it up.

You pump it up, and then what do you do?

We got the troughs there.

And they know to come over there for their water?

Livestock knows where the water holes are. They know that! They go four or five miles to graze, and then back to the water. That's the main problem we've got here—we don't have enough water. The livestock, they got to go a long ways, and they waste a lot of time trailing back and forth.

Especially in the summer when it's hot?

Summer, it's worse, yeah—when it's hot, yeah. If we've got a little snow on the ground..., Of course we feed all the catde in the wintertime anyway, but the sheep, with a little snow, they'll do just as good—better than water. Sheep don't need much water anyway. But cows, they need water. They drink about ten or fifteen gallons a day. Sheep, they might drink one gallon a day.

I read that some ranchers bring their animals to different places in the winter and different places in the spring. Do you move your animals?

We do that, we do the same thing.

Tell me what you do.

We've got a place we call "winter ranch," so we go down there in the wintertime.

How far away is that?

Well, it isn't too far here, maybe about twenty miles. Same area, but different allotment, we call it.

So you do your cowboy stuff, you round them up?

We round them up and take them over there. If you help them a little bit, they know where to go. The cows know—they know the season and they know. The only thing that holds them is, we've got fences everywhere. So you've got to put them on the other side of the fence. After that...

Is there a gate that opens, and then you lock it?

Yeah, you've got to make sure they go on the other side, and then from there, they...

Can you just leave them there?

Well, sometimes. Sometimes we push them where we want [them to go].

Once they're there for the winter, do you have to check on them regularly?

Oh yes, oh yeah, if it comes a big snow, or something. I gotta pump water there. I go every other day—never miss, every other day, I gotta go.

Oh, you go yourself, every other day.

I go myself, which is about a hundred miles a trip. And then I pump water in maybe five or six wells.

How many cattle would there be there in the winter?

About a thousand, twelve hundred.

Oh, that's a lot! You have to check them and make sure they're okay?

Oh yeah, and they take quite a bit of water, too.

Now, when it snows, how do they eat?

Well, they pick on the snow, and they get enough moisture—unless it's real cold.

Do you ever have to bring them extra feed?

Then there comes a many-foot snow, more, then you gotta bring them home. Bring them home and feed them hay.

And you feed them here?

Feed them on the ranch, yeah.

Do you take them somewhere else in the summer?

Summer, we run this side here. We call it two different allotments. And we bring them here and they go up in the hills up here.

Is that nearby?

Oh yeah, just right through here, yeah. Which is another fifty miles, you know, north and south.

Do they have a lot of land to wander? When you bring them there, is it pretty open?

Well, no, it ain't open any more. No, we've got fences everywhere. Now we got to do a lot more riding than we used to. Before, the livestock, they managed themselves pretty much. We do the riding in the fall to gather them up, you know, to brand the calves and

stuff, and we bring them in. We call it, you know, the meadows, our private ground. Inside, you know. And do that in the fall. But now we've got to pretty much be riding almost every day—pushing here and pushing there, crossing a fence here, and crossing a fence over there. See, we got too many fences now.

Now are the fences because there are other people using some of the land?

No, no, BLM themselves, they call it riparians, wherever you have a little water running in the creek—they don't want no livestock around the creek. They think they're going to raise a big meadow in there see, and stuff like that.

Oh, so they're fencing areas?

They're fencing it, so many areas.

I see. So you have certain areas that you can only use—not wide—open ranges.

Yeah. No more of that.

When did that start?

Well it started about three, four years ago.

Oh, just recently?

Yeah. Oh yeah. We have fences on what we call the private allotments—fences around it. But now, we've got so many cross-fences on the same allotment. That's what hurts. I don't know if you follow me on that, but by cross-fences, I mean you've got one big fence around, and then you've got so many of them in between.

So how do you get around them?

Well, that's what I said: you've got to go riding, and you've got to push them through the gate.

Oh, you have to push them where they were never used to going?

Well, they used to go themselves, and now they hit the fence, and they line up on the fence there.

They don't know what to do?

They want to go on the other side, but the fence is there, so you got to do something, and you're only allowed certain times a year to go on the other side and all that. So you got to wait until a certain day to do that. Before, they managed themselves, whenever they please, they go there and eat away!

So it's different in the last few years.

It's different. It's getting harder and harder all the time. We're getting older, and now we gotta do more work!

Oh my!

That's true.

Now, when Madge and I left here last time on our visit, I saw a coyote running through the hills. Then I read where coyotes sometimes eat the little baby lambs. Do you have any problems with coyotes?

Oh yeah, quite a bit, quite a bit of problem. But...

Is there anything you can do?

Well, we try to control them. Every time we see one, we try to shoot him, and stuff like that. But there's so many of them, you shoot one, and five more show up in the same area.

How do you protect your little baby lambs?

Well, they kill quite a few. They don't get them all, so we keep on. [laughs] Then we have what we call the state government trappers, you know.

Who's that?

Well, the government has a program, to control them things. They use an airplane, shoot from the airplane and all that. And even that now, they're fighting with the public—they want to stop that too. The city people, they don't...

They don't understand coyotes kill the lambs.

They don't understand anything. That's alright to them. So that's pretty hard. Right now, we've been fighting too damn much. I don't think it's worth it. We don't need this kind of stuff now.

Do your daughters want to continue ranching?

Well, they like it, but I don't know if they'll be able to. And pretty soon they'll get disgusted and something's going to happen. If the country doesn't need us, we don't need the country. We support a lot of people here. They don't know where their food comes from, that's the problem. The government should say something about it. But it's politics.

There's more votes from those kind of people than there [are from] the ranchers. So the government, they go along with them.

Now I know some farmers in the country get government subsidies. Do any ranchers get government subsidies?

Well yeah, like if it's a drought, they try to give you so much, but not the full thing—no, never. But I don't care for that. We don't need that. But, I'm going to tell you like it is.

That's what I want you to do.

Ourselves, they get \$50,000—that's the highest. If you buy the hay and you don't put up any yourself and all that, you've got to fill [out] a bunch of papers and stuff. Then they come up with figures, what you're able or not to collect that money. But the highest they go is \$50,000. Like the house we bought up here, almost \$300,000 of hay, this year, too, and they only give \$50,000. Supposed to pay half. If you don't buy more than \$100,000, they will give you half, yes. They give you \$50,000. But you go over that, that's up to you. And myself, we used it this year some, but next year, even if they have the program, I won't apply for it, because we paid over \$150,000 income tax on it, so they took more than that back, so what's the use to take it from over there?! [ironic chuckle]

Oh my.

So the hay we buy, we can deduct that, at least.

Okay, tax deductible for the farming, yes. But you can't if they give you reimbursement, is that it?

That's the problem—they take that back. They don't give it to us, they take it back. So that's another deal in there. That's another thing too, those people from the city, they know about that and they say we are using taxpayers money. You know we are taxpayers too! [laughs] I think we're using our own money, back and forth here—more than somebody else's. [laughter]

Now I see you have a very beautiful home here. And you said you moved in when you first came here, the house was here. I'm sure it wasn't like it is now.

No.

Describe a little what it was like then, and how you and Grace and your family have this very, very beautiful home now.

Well, in the beginning, there were people working here—a man and wife, and they had two kids. They were working for the owner before. So when we bought the place, the owner told us, "Well, we'll leave all the furniture there." But anyway, they had two plac one here and the other one used to be—we sold that. Smoky Valley over there in Birch Creek, we called it. The owner used to stay over there in the summertime. And in winter, he moved to Reno. He had a house in Reno and stayed in the town there. Anyway, when they moved out—the people who were working here—they took all the furniture, from this house. So we complained to the owner.

We told him, "We thought you said you'd leave all the furniture."

"Well, those people, they took the furniture, so I guess it's their own." So he didn't do anything about it, and we had to let go. And they cleaned the house out. We didn't have

anything here. They left nothing here. Even the can opener! They came a few days later and took the can opener away. Anyway, this other place where the owner used to live, he left the antique furniture that was in there.

Where was that house?

That was in Birch Creek, Smoky Valley over there.

Is it still there?

The place is still there, but we sold that. We sold that a long time ago. Anyway, after we sold the place, we brought that furniture here. And some of those antique [pieces], that's where they came from.

Was that before you moved into the empty house?

Well, it was an empty house. We had to put our own bed in there, a few furnishings. We had to little-by-little furnish the house.

So was it later that you brought the antique furniture here?

Yeah, a few years later. We kept that place about five years or so, maybe a year longer. Then we moved [that furniture] here, which wasn't too many [pieces], but a few, like that desk in there came from over there.

Handsome! Was the house the same size as it is now?

The building itself, yeah. No, not quite. We used to have open porches on both sides, so we made another bathroom in there and the kitchen, and this is a flower place and all that. We fixed all those things. But it was

open when we came here—just a screen. They used to have a big table in there. Then they kept big crews all the time—haying and stuff was pretty much by hand. Now, three people can put up a lot of hay with the machines. Everything is faster. We put up the hay, myself and two daughters here.

How many workmen at one time would you hire here during the busy season?

Well, altogether, sheepherders, we always have three or four sheepherders and another couple here. I'll say about five, the most we have.

Did they stay here on the property?

Yeah, we fed them here in the house.

Where did they sleep?

Bunkhouse up there. They eat with us. Even now, we've got an Indian guy here working, and he eats with us.

He lives here?

He eats with us and he sleeps in the bunkhouse.

That doesn't look like a bunkhouse—it looks like a very fine home.

Well [chuckles] we fixed that last year—rebuilt it. Anyway, he stays there.

Did Grace do all the cooking for these men?

She always did all the cooking, yeah.

Do you still have seasons when you have that many workmen?

Right now, no. We're pretty much running it ourselves. The last couple of years, we didn't have no water, so we had no hay to put up. So that's kind of an easier summer. And then we're kind of thinking, you know, we pasture those fields instead of putting up the hay, and buy the hay. Because Uncle Sam takes our profit anyway, so I'd rather put it in the hay.

And make your life a little easier?

Yeah, make it a little easier. I'm old enough to get retired now, so I should slow down, huh? [laughter]

It looks like you've always enjoyed your ranching.

I enjoy it, you bet.

And doing such physical work. Are there other interests in your life, that if you did slow down, that you could pursue, that you wanted to do?

No, nothing. I don't like fishing, I don't like hunting. I like this. But I don't want to be rushing, you know—take time and enjoy it. I go over in the pickup to pump water and watch the livestock, I enjoy that. You know, the calves, and...

Oh, to look at the scenery.

Scenes, yeah. I enjoy that, better than anything else.

This is a beautiful, scenic area—mountains and snow.

Yeah, it is. It is beautiful. It's too bad we gotta have all those problems. And we don't think we are ruining the country.

It doesn't look like it!

No. I think we're improving. So that's pretty hard to take.

Do you ever have a dream to go back with Grace to visit your country?

Well, we're talking about it. Her parents are still living. Mother, she's kind of bad, Dad, he's kind of off his mind anyway—I don't think he'll recognize us. But Mother, she wants us to go. But I don't know, maybe this summer.

Do you have any family still living there?

I've got a lot of brothers and sisters there.

I hope you can go.

In fact, I've got six of them. three sisters and three brothers. They're all family.

That would be a nice way.

Yeah. They've been here: my oldest brother and one sister have been here a few years ago. And last summer we had Grace's two brothers here with their wives.

Oh, that's nice!

Yeah. So we took a little vacation, went to Montana, and made a trip or two.

Have your daughters been back to your country?

No.

Is that something they'd like to do?

I don't think so. They don't speak French, so they're afraid they wouldn't...And over there now too, those younger ones, you know, they don't hardly speak any Basque. They don't want to get mixed up with it. They don't like the French language. [laughs]

And your daughters probably have to take care of the ranch if you both go.

Yeah. Well, we can't all go, no. Somebody's got to stay here. So I don't know, maybe. Grace, I told her, "Why don't you go over?" She's been twice, herself.

Oh, how nice!

Yeah. But she's kind of afraid to go now, herself. She gets kind of scared in the airports.

It is very busy.

And if you're not used to that kind of stuff...But somebody—there's always people back and forth. Maybe she'll go this summer.

Maybe one of your daughters can go with her.

Yeah, maybe.

Maybe your granddaughter.

Jackie wants to go, because she's got a little kid now. So I don't know, it's pretty hard on her too.

Oh. But maybe your granddaughter can go with your wife.

Yeah. [laughs] I don't know, though. Her too, she's not too anxious to go to those places—not yet anyway, maybe later.

I'm sure there are many things that I didn't ask you, so I want you to think a little bit about your life here, and if I forgot to ask you anything, or there's something else you want to tell me about your life here...

Well, right now [laughs], I don't know. We covered pretty much of it. If you want to get every detail, I can go for a week! [chuckles]

Is there a certain area that we haven't touched at all? Because I don't know your life, just some of it.

Maybe Grace will come up with something different.

And another thing is, that I can come back. I want to interview your daughters, and then I can listen to the tape and listen to Grace's, and you can think about it, and we can always add to it, because I'll be coming back every month, at least until September. Because I think that it's a lifestyle that is so fascinating, and the fascinating part is, your coming from another country and leading such a life of contentment, hard work, and despite problems, a lot of successes.

We're proud of ourselves. [chuckles]

Yes, you should be.

I think the country has been good for us, and I think we've been pretty good for the country.

And you've been good for your country by helping your family.

That too. Another thing, there too, like myself and a lot of others: that Basque country over there, it's a small country. It's rich, but so

many people in there. Pretty much, every farm in there, they have somebody here, now and then, and they all help some.

That's wonderful.

They improved a lot over there now. And the biggest part of it [is because] the boys came to the United States to work, and they took some money over there and they fixed their places.

I know what else I want to ask you: Even though you've lived and worked on the ranch, you must have some first-hand knowledge about the dramatic changes in Austin when it was a bustling mining town, and now without the mining, the economy is hurting so much in town, and it's almost a ghost town.

Yeah.

Can you tell me anything about your personal observance of this long period and dramatic change?

Austin itself, I don't think changed too much. We've had some change there for a couple of years, but that's it. As long as I remember it, Austin has been about the same ever since I've been here—because all the old-time miners, they were already gone.

Oh, a long time ago.

There used to be, they say, 10,000 in there.

That's what I read.

But since we've been here, it's about the same amount of people, pretty much. It's been that way. Then about a few years ago, there,

they opened a couple of mines in there. They ran them a year or two, but then they shut it off. And then for us it wasn't any better—which is worse. The town itself, they were a little better off, those businesspeople in there. But other than that, Austin has been pretty much...

Because it looks like so many businesses closed there.

They never were open.

Oh, they were like that.

They were like that. [laughs] I remember there was a post office there, and a grocery store, one of them. In fact, now, they've got a hardware store. They never had that before.

The one that Madge developed?

Yeah, that one there.

And she sold it.

Okay, so, they opened not too long ago.

Oh, you didn't have that there in the early days?

They didn't have that earlier. In fact, Frank, he used to work for the Forest [Service] and we ran the sheep up there and he kind of bossed us around up there. [laughs]

So it hasn't changed that much.

No, Austin hasn't changed all that much. And the farming, I mean ranchers, in this town, pretty much the same people around—I guess—that I know of. I know our neighbors changed some because we

bought quite a few places around here. That's a change. There were people in there before.

Well, you live in a beautiful valley—you've helped make it a beautiful valley. It's been one of my great pleasures visiting here, getting to know you and your family, and seeing your beautiful ranch.

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank so much for sharing your life experience with us.

You're welcome. And if you want to ask more later, I'll be around.

Then I'll return. This is the end of this interview.

PAUL INCHAUSPE
PHOTOGRAPHS



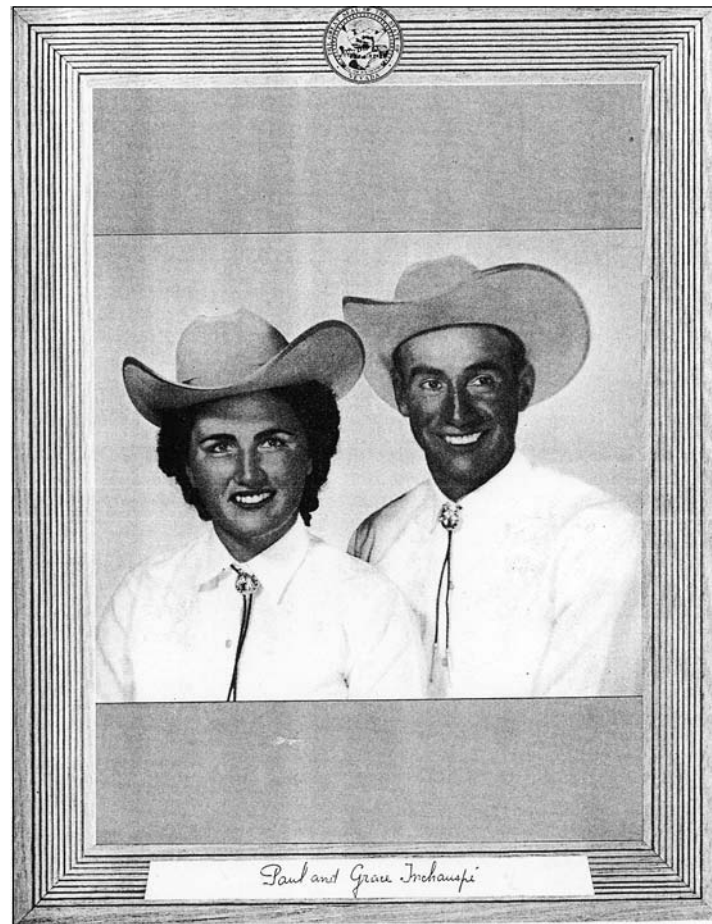
GRACE AND PAUL INCHAUSPE, MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Inchauspe Ranch, Silver Creek Ranch, May 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



From the book, *Nevada, The Silver State, Volume I*, published by Western States Historical Publishers, Inc. 1970, Carson City, Nevada

PAUL INCHAUSPE
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Paul Inchauspe Interview

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PAULINE INCHAUSPE**PREFACE**

Pauline Inchauspe, born in 1959, started her life at the Silver Creek Ranch, near Austin, Nevada. Her parents, Grace and Paul Inchauspe, were both born in the Pyrenees in France. After several years working as a sheepherder for an uncle in Ely, Nevada and starting his own sheep business, Paul returned to the Pyrenees to look for a wife. After marrying Grace in 1958, they returned together to Nevada and several months later purchased the Silver Creek Ranch.

Pauline, the oldest of three daughters, tells of a very happy home environment. Basque was the language spoken in the house, and as she learned English in school, the family learned it together. Their ranch at Silver Creek was twenty-six miles from Austin, with dirt roads, so it took her mother half-an-hour each way to drive her daughters to and from school. Pauline and her sisters graduated as juniors and were valedictorians of their class.

Pauline started doing chores at a very early age, including milking cows, feeding the

horses and chickens, and raising the leppie lambs feeding them with a bottle. Some of her happiest memories are the sheepherding camps where they all went with their father, living in a homemade sheep wagon. When she was sixteen Pauline joined her father on horseback moving the cattle to their summer and winter ranges. And in the summertime they put up the hay, and drove the equipment to cut, rake and bale the hay. Her father expected his daughters to do the same kind of work the men did. They also had to help their mother in the house. They all worked seven days a week, sunrise to sunset. Except for fishing occasionally, Pauline doesn't remember ever playing, but never missed it. She tell us she and sister Eveline were born to be outside working on the ranch.

Pauline's daughter Katrina enriched all of their lives. She enjoys riding her horse, helping with the cattle round-ups with her grandfather, mother and aunt. She also continues the family tradition of excelling in school. Although the family is isolated, there is a constant flow of relatives and friends from

the Basque country, California and from Elko and Battle Mountain. The Inchauspes are such a loving warm family and so hospitable, it's easy to understand why so many people are eager to visit them.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Pauline Inchauspe at the Silver Creek Ranch, Austin, Nevada, June 21, 1993.

Sylvia Arden: Pauline, thank you for allowing us to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you tell us your full name?

Pauline Inchauspe: Pauline Mary Inchauspe.

Where were you born?

Ely, Nevada.

And what was the date?

December 11, 1959.

You were born in Ely, Nevada, but where was your family living?

Here at Silver Creek.

And where is Silver Creek?

In Austin, Nevada.

How far is the ranch out of the town?

It's about twenty-six miles.

Now, what I want to ask is your very earliest recollections of your home environment, before we go into the ranching.

It was a very happy home environment.

You were the first child, the oldest?

Yes.

When you were about five or six, did you have a sister by then?

Yes, I had one for sure, and I think Eveline was a little baby—I know she was—when I was six.

Tell me the names of your sisters.

The second one is Jackie. She's a-year-and-a-half younger than I am. And the youngest is Eveline. She's five years younger than I am.

Oh! Okay, quite a difference there. As a little girl, in the house, first tell me about your life in the house, what it was like, and when you started to do some chores.

I started young. Mom needed help, there were no other women in the house, so I started helping her. I know at seven or eight years old I was washing dishes and doing a lot of chores—we all did. We did a lot of chores as we were growing up, because she needed the help.

Tell me those chores, besides washing dishes. What were some of the other things?

We'd peel potatoes and we took care of the chickens. I don't know what-all we did, but we did a lot of things.

What language was spoken in the house?

Basque, until I started first grade. And as I learned English in school, we all learned English together.

I see. That must have been very hard.

I don't remember it being hard!
[laughs]

Wonderful! Bright girl!

No, I don't remember it being hard at all.

Now, when you started school, how old were you?

Seven. Mom didn't take me the first year when I could have went because that would have meant she had to drive two years with just one child in school. So I stayed home a year. And then when I was seven I started, and then my sister started the following year.

Where did you go to school?

In Austin.

And tell me how you got there.

She drove us every morning, then come home, and then she went and get us every evening.

How long a drive was it? because some of it's dirt roads.

Yeah, it takes a half-hour.

Was the main road dirt then?

No, it was paved. It was six miles of dirt road, and twenty miles [of paved road].

Now let's go into your school. Tell me from your recollections, when you first started, was that your first interaction with a lot of children?

Yes. We didn't have kids around here—there's nobody.

Tell me how that experience was. Do you remember?

The only thing I remember about being in the first grade or the second grade was kids stealing my lunch, because they knew mom put a good lunch [laughter], and they would steal my lunch. We all had the same first-and second-grade teacher: her name was Mrs. Coon and she took care of us like...because she knew what we come from. We weren't backward, but we were kind of sheltered.

Were you the only Basque children in the classroom at that time?

Yes.

What would the lunch be that she packed that everyone wanted?

[laughs] I don't remember, but I remember Mrs. Coon hiding my lunch pail first thing I come to school in the morning! [laughter]

Well that's a compliment, isn't it?

Yeah! I remember that. I really don't remember any bad times and, you know, having a hard time because I didn't have the language. I don't remember any of that.

The kids didn't tease you?

No.

Did you make friends?

Yes, I had a close friend all the way through grade school that was a farmer's daughter. Her name was Debby Farr. They're still down there in Antelope Valley, their family. She's not—she's in New York City.

Where are they? You're pointing, but on tape they won't know where. [laughter]

In Antelope Valley. It's on the road to Battle Mountain.

Okay, when you were in the classroom with the children, how did you learn English? Did the teacher devote a little more time to you?

I don't remember at all.

When did you learn to read English?

In school.

Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

No. It was that same building that the grade school goes to now in Austin. It was first and second grade in the same classroom.

Okay, so did you catch up quickly with second grade?

Yeah, I must have. No, I started first grade.

Did you go along with your sister through school?

No, I went one year myself. Had I went to school when I was supposed to, Mom would have had to drive two years with me alone, and then the third year my sister started.

Oh. So she drove one year alone so she could get you started.

Yeah. Mrs. Coon always used to say that when she took us to school, Mom was crying, my sister was crying, j. was crying [laughter], and Mrs. Coon couldn't push her out fast enough! She said, "She'll be alright. You go." Everybody was crying!

Shows what a tight-knit, loving family you were. Did you cry? Yeah, you did.

Yeah, we all cried.

But then did you get to look forward to going there?

Yeah, I liked school—we all did. We all liked school and we did well. I remember sitting outside and high school kids helping me read. But then I did well in school, all the way through school.

Were there later other Basque children?

No.

You were the only ones?

Yeah.

How many kids were in your classroom, do you remember?

On the average, there probably was ten.

So you could get a lot of individual attention that way?

Yeah.

Did you have time at school—what kind of recreation was there?

I got to be a cheerleader in seventh grade, and I did it for one year. And it was a lot of hassle going and stuff. So I didn't do any more until I got to be a junior, and then I played volleyball. And then my sisters started behind me, the same time I did, so she got *two* years of sports, and then my youngest sister, she got four years of sports! And now my daughter, she's going to have the whole shebang! So things progress.

So being the oldest, you had to miss a lot.

Oh, yeah, but I didn't mind.

When did you start to drive to school?

When I was fourteen.

And then you were allowed to have a license?

Yeah, I got a special license, just to drive to school and back. I couldn't drive around town or anything.

Did you like that?

Yeah.

Make you feel pretty big?

Yeah. [laughs] But I'd been driving. I didn't drive to school, but I drove around here.

Would you be able to drive up those hills? Did they let you drive right up to the school?

Yeah.

What did the town look like when you went in to start school?

Pretty much the way it does now. And then it had a boom in between. But when I went to school, it was pretty quiet like it is now.

Did you ever go into Austin for anything else besides school?

Church. We'd go to the Catholic Church.

Tell me what the Catholic Church then was like.

The priest came from Eureka He lived in Eureka and he had a parish in Carlin and one in Austin, and every two weeks he'd come around. He taught us catechism. He'd give us books, and then he'd teach us on it and show us movies and stuff when he'd come, and Mom would cook him dinner, and we'd have services in Austin.

Oh, did he stay here overnight?

No, but he'd come and then he'd go back to Eureka.

Uh-huh, he knew the good food! [laughter] by reputation!

Yeah.

Who in your family would go?

Usually Mom and us three girls. And then on Christmas and Easter my dad goes to church.

How many would be at the church services?

Usually it was just two ladies. Once in a while a few other people would come.

Not many?

No, just a handful. It still is just a handful. [chuckles] But it was an old lady, Hester Dory—she's still alive. She was there. And Elisa Gandolfo, and I remember those two being there all the time.

Did you like going?

Yes!

Now I'm going to bring you back to your ranch now. I want to find out how old were you when you started to ride a horse.

We rode as kids around here and stuff. When I started working was my last year of high school. I was sixteen.

Let's go back to your childhood. How old were you when you started to ride a horse for fun?

There's pictures of us on an old mule, and we were little—I mean like three, four years old. But I don't remember doing that—it's just that I seen it in pictures. But I remember as an eight-, nine-year-old, playing on horses around here.

Tell me what those early years were like. First let's start with the kind of chores that you did, up until you were about fourteen. Describe for me a typical day when you weren't in school, when you were here on the weekends, holidays, summers: what would your day be like?

Well, I have a short memory. I really don't remember what I would do in a day,

but I know that like when we had the sheep, I remember specifically putting the groceries for the shepherders when it was time to go to the sheep camp. And I knew what needed to go, and I did that. And I know I washed a lot of dishes and cleaned a lot of floors and things like that. And we helped Mom. She would pack food to the sheep camp and stuff. And I remember helping her pack the food and haul it over there. And then we did animal chores here, like milk cows and feed the horses and chickens.

Did you like that?

Yeah. We raised a lot of leppie lambs during lambing time—you know, when they don't have a mother.

Describe that to people who've never lived with young sheep.

Well, most of the sheep have two lambs, and sometimes they only want one. So then people have to take care of the other one if you don't find another mother to give it to.

What will it do, just neglect it and not feed that little lamb?

Yeah.

Tell me what you did.

Dad would bring them in, and then we would start them from a bottle and feed them two or three times a day from the bottle, and we still do that.

Did you like that?

Yeah. Then we run the sheep ourselves, so we had a lot of lambs. Now we only have a handful.

I understand from your mom and dad's interviews that they would take you kids out to the sheepherding camps. How old were you when you started to go? Real little?

Real little. We went until I was about sixteen years old, and we'd go on weekends. But that's for about a six-week period in the spring. We missed a little bit of school during those times when I was younger. When I got older, we didn't miss, because school was more important then. When we were in first and second grade, I seen on my report card, a lot of days were missed [laughter] during that time! But you know, those were some of the happiest memories. I wish so bad my daughter could have done that.

Oh. Describe that too.

We lived in a home-made sheep camp, a tent on the outside.

Do you have one here I could take a picture of?

Yeah, it's still over there, that same one. It has one bed, and my dad would sleep on the floor, and we'd fight over who got to sleep with him on the floor. There was a wagon the horses were tied to—shepherd horses. And our job was to water the horses and take care of the lambs. It was a fun time. We were out, no TV, no nothing—we just had to entertain ourselves.

Where would these camps be?

It would be in the lambing ground. The sheep go to Ione in the winter.

Ione?

Yeah, they go south, Ione-Gabbs area. And then in the spring they come back to

this area, right around here, and they get sheared in the first part of April. And then they start lambing around the tenth of April. And it's about a ten-mile radius that we were in. And you move the camp every three or four days, because in those days, they used to follow the sheep as they lambed. There was a shepherd with the sheep almost all the time. They kept the sheep together, and every day they'd move them a little bit and camp them at night—the sheep had to stay. Then as they lambed, the sheep would move on, and the ones with lambs would stay back. And then the shepherd rode through those, and if there were any orphans or sheep having trouble, they took care of them. But now, they turn the sheep loose and nobody messes with them for a month, and then they gather them up and the sheep lamb on their own.

What if there's one that's rejected? Just nature, they die?

Yeah. They separate—right at the beginning they run them through the corral and they separate the ones that look like. See, some sheep have really big udders, and the tits are long and the lambs can't get them. So they separate those. They see them and they separate those out and they do them in the barn. But then, everything was loose and you had to rope the sheep. When you roped that sheep you disturbed a lot of sheep that didn't have any trouble, because sheep aren't all that easy to catch. They're not gentle—they won't stand there and let you go... You have to chase them on horseback. So now I'm sure you lose some, but overall, it's better for the sheep. So we're modernized now.

This sheep camp experience is really vivid in your mind.

Yes, that's my biggest sorrow. We leased the sheep out my last year of high school and we've only run them one year since I've been out of school.

I see, so they're leased where others are taking care of them?

Taking care of them, yeah.

So there's no opportunity for your daughter to do that.

No. [laughs] But it was a fun time. It was hard too, because when Mom would take us to school, she'd take us in the morning, and then she'd drive to sheep camp and she'd feed breakfast and put dinner in the oven or line up dinner, and then she'd come get us at school. We'd come home and we did the chores here. The next morning it was the same.

How many would be at the sheep camp?

Five or six men, most of the time.

Did they all have their separate trailers?

No, Mom's was the cook camp. But they had another camp or two that they slept in. They had a little stove in it that they spend the winter in, but they didn't do any cooking, she fed them.

So they came back to where your camp was to eat?

Yeah.

Tell me who these people were, where they came from.

They were Basque, from the Basque country, young men that came on a contract. They don't come any more, but they used to.

But at that time, did they just work for your ranch?

Yes.

Okay. And when they weren't out on the sheep camp, where were they?

Those ones that were there, were there all year round with the sheep. But with the sheep in the wintertime they stay in a camp, in the summertime they go into a tent and they follow the sheep with a tent.

Did they ever come and stay here?

Oh, once in a while when they went to town, but no.

Not usually. Now when you said they came from the Basque country, did your father send for them?

The cattlemen and sheepmen belong to an association, and it's an agency that does the paperwork and brings them in. They come on a three-year contract, they stay for three years. In those days, if they wanted to stay longer, they got the green card, an alien registration card, and then they got to stay longer. Now sheepherders come from Peru and Chile and Mexico, but after three years, it's mandatory they return home. If they want to come again, then they have to go through the paperwork again and come back.

I see. You're the first one who's told me that, and I've asked questions, [but never gotten

the complete story]. So was this a Basque association?

No. It still exists, but in those days a lot of people like my dad came. Opportunities were scant over there—there was nothing for the men to do, so they were looking for an “out” all the time to go somewhere and better their [living conditions]. So lots and lots of Basque people came to the United States. And then as Basque people got into positions where they had sheep and stuff, then even more Basque young men came and worked on those ranches. Now, they’re all better educated than we are over there.

Is that right?!

Yeah, there’s nobody who wants to come from over there. Life is much better over there now than it was then. I think it’s even easier than it is here.

Is that right?! Now also, they were shepherders, so they were used to the life.

Yeah, they were all right out of the Basque country where they all had farm flocks and they’re used to being out and alone. It’s a hard life. The work’s not hard, the work’s very easy. But it takes a strong character to be alone. It’s alright to be alone a day or two, but when you go weeks and weeks at a time!

Now where was the headquarters for this association?

It’s in California, I really don’t know. It’s in L.A. or...No, It’s not here.

I see. And then because it was through the association and they were guaranteed work, the country let them come in with no problem?

Yes.

But they had to have a guarantee of...

Employment, yeah. And they had to go to work on a ranch, for those first three years.

I see, like a sponsor for three years.

Yeah. Then a lot of them went to town and worked at mines. After they filled-in their three years on the ranch, then they got their green card, and then they were allowed to go wherever they wanted. They were a registered alien.

I understand. Are the conditions there now due to changes in government? Or what is the reason that it’s so much better now?

Well, government has a lot [to do with it]. They get a lot of government help. When my mom and dad came, there was no water in the houses, and they were way behind America Now they’ve gone way ahead. [laughter] In a very short time they’ve gone way ahead.

That’s good. And now I want to bring you back. You were at the sheep camps. You said you were about fourteen, fifteen, sixteen?

Yeah.

So now I want you to start to describe your responsibilities and the kind of a life...Did you go through eighth grade?

Yeah. Oh, I finished high school. I graduated valedictorian of my class.

Oh wow!

And I graduated as a junior.

Oh really?!

We all did. We all graduated as a junior, and valedictorians of our class.

When you were in school then, you were very diligent? Did you all do your homework and read?

Yeah, and I still read a lot. And we did read a lot and stuff. I probably shouldn't say this: It's not really hard to get good grades when you're in a small school. You know, there's a lot of individual attention, and if you pay attention a little bit...Mom is from the old school: You did your schoolwork! [laughs]

That's a big part of it.

Oh yeah! And see, like my daughter now, she's a really good student, but it's because my mom goes the extra mile and she makes sure that Katrina is ready. And that helped us a lot too.

Young people don't realize it, but you're sure grateful later, right?

Yes!

So then when you graduated high school, then your time was free. Now tell me about your life when you finished school and here on the ranch.

Well, my last year of high school I got more and more involved with what was going

on around here. I don't remember so much. We helped Mom, but I never went out and did things with Dad when we were kids. We'd just help Mom, because she had a lot to do, and we helped her. In haying time, I think I must have been about thirteen, fourteen years old when I started helping my dad running haying equipment. But that was about the only thing. I didn't go horseback and stuff, then because there were men here.

Oh, there were men here.

Yeah, there were men here helping him. But then the last year of school I started the beginning of the year, and I had a hard time finishing the last year because I had to do correspondence courses from the university to get my credits so I could graduate as a junior. Mom would lock that door right there and lock me in here. [chuckles] Otherwise, I wouldn't do it!

Oh, in other words, your last year you did the work at home while you were ranching?

I did my junior year in school, but then I had to have two credits to graduate. I would have had to go my senior year, just for two credits. So I took those at home.

What courses were they?

American History and American Government.

And then you had to take the tests without a teacher to...

Yeah. I think Eveline even had to take two or three credits, but she did them from Washoe County. They had a program when she got ready. But when I got started, there

wasn't one. Well, we didn't know about it, if there was. And I had to do it through BYU (Brigham Young University) [laughing] and it was kind of tough! It was nothing like we were used to doing here. And my sister is very dedicated—the youngest one, Eveline—to homework, or anything. When she starts something, she does it from start to finish. I dilly daily 'til the last minute.

You want to do something else!

She used to lock the door, but I always had a book in here I was reading. She thought I was doing homework! But it was tough, I had a hard time finishing, because I wanted to go with my dad. And I remember days, taking my sisters to school and then coming back in the car to where he was, and he'd have a horse for me and then I'd go.

So you used to drive your sister to school and took that responsibility for your mom?

Yeah. That was my last year of school I did that. Then when I graduated, my sister was sixteen.

Oh, and she was driving.

And then she got to drive. And when she graduated, this one was ready to go.

So now let's go back, and very carefully tell me when you started with your father, what were the kinds of work you started to do with him, and describe it in detail.

I don't know what you want me to say. I remember moving cattle this way and that way, and I just followed along.

Tell me how you moved cattle.

Well, they saddle the horses here in the morning and take them in the truck or horse trailer. We didn't have a horse trailer then, we just had a truck. But take them to some part of the ranch, or outside on the BLM, and then you kind of make a sweep, you gather up a bunch, a couple of hundred head. And then you move them to wherever he wants to move them. See now we're gathering cattle from the winter range and we're moving them to the mountains.

Now when you ride with the horses, you circle around them and they follow you? How do you move them?

You circle around them and you do a lot of hollering and stuff and they kind of gather together. Cows don't follow you, you have to push them.

So how do you push them?

Well, you get behind them with the horse and they'll go some direction. And if they're not going the direction you *want* them to go, then you kind of move left or right, whatever way, and they move away from you all the time. They don't want you near them.

Do you touch them with anything?

No. They don't want you near them, they're wild. They're not hand-raised, they're all wild, and when you get by them, they know when they see a horse and rider it's time to do something. So they have some instinct in them.

Getting away from you?

Yeah, getting away, or they know it's time to... Like the cattle now, they know it's time to

go up to the mountains, so when we go over there...

Oh, they know that?

Yeah, it's instinct in them. They've done it a few times and they know.

Now, in those days, when you were starting to do that, how many head of cattle were there?

I really couldn't tell you. I have no idea what they run then, no.

How many miles is it where you have to move them?

The longest trip we made with cattle was about fifty miles—not in one day, but I mean like it takes three or four days. But the longest stretch they go in is about—from the end of the winter range to the farthest point of the summer range is about a fifty-mile trek we make up one valley and down the other.

And how did you camp at night?

We come home, and then we go back and start again.

Do you put the horses...

In the trailer, and we come home.

So as not to tire them too much?

Yeah, and the next day we go with a different horse.

I see, okay.

We all have three or four horses that we ride.

Is that something you enjoy doing?

Yes.

What about working with your father?

That's alright too. [laughs] He's from the old school too. He's kind of...I don't know what the word is. And it's hard...

Disciplined?

Yes, very. He expects—you know, we're girls, but that doesn't matter [laughs] too much.

The work has to be done!

That's right, that's exactly right. So you do it.

Did you find that you fit into it easily? into the life, and you liked it?

Yes. I wouldn't be able to do city—any desk job or any inside job. Both my sister and I are born to be outside. We don't even like being inside this house! Housework is not my cup of tea! [chuckles] But we do help here still. That's the thing I see: we do both men's and women's jobs, because when we come in, we have to help Mom. We keep house and stuff. And then we go outside and we have to do the same thing the men do outside.

But if it was a boy...

He wouldn't have to do that, no! I've said that a time or two! [laughs]

She knows it, right?!

Yeah. That's very true though, because if it was a man, like my dad, see... We don't expect

him to, but he's not a modern. He does men things. When his day is done, when he comes inside, dinner's on the table. That's from the old school.

That's right.

If we had a brother, I'd be kind of curious to see...If I was the oldest, I guarantee you, he'd be doing housework! [laughter]

Now, what else besides rounding up the cattle? What are your other chores?

Then summertime we put up hay.

Describe putting up hay.

That was a major job that I did as a young, young kid, as an adult job. You know, we had a lot of responsibility.

Describe, for those of us who have never seen or done that.

We have machinery. We have machines that cut the hay—it's like a lawn mower and it cuts the hay. But they're big pieces of equipment. And you drive those up and down the field. And then when the hay is all laying down, cut, it air dries a couple of days. Then you go with another piece of equipment—it's a tractor with rakes behind it. It's like your garden rake, but they're machinery, and they move two of the rows into one row, and it lifts it off the ground and then it airs it up some, so it dries some more. Because if you put hay in a stack that's still green, it molds and it's not any good. It has to be thoroughly dried so it keeps for the winter. And I remember as a kid, I drove the rakes. That was my first job.

How old were you?

I think I was twelve when I started that. Then every summer I did that while we were haying. And then when I was sixteen, I moved up to driving the baler. That's the next piece of equipment that you pull with a tractor and it puts the hay into squares and ties it with wire. And then in the old days, and I kind of remember it, they used to have a truck and they pulled this conveyor belt beside it, and it would pick up the bales off the ground and up into the truck, and then there were men that stacked the hay on the truck. And then there were men that stacked the hay on the ground off the truck. Now the bales are much bigger and you won't find anybody that does that any more. So now we have equipment. My dad drives a nice—it's parked outside there. It's a big piece of equipment that picks up the hay off the ground and puts it in the stack, standing up. In the wintertime we have another truck that picks that same pile that this one puts in the stack, it picks it up and then we feed that off the truck to the cows. It puts sixty-nine bales in a compact square in the stack. And in the wintertime, the same pile, sixty-nine bales, is picked up again and we take it and feed it to the co one truckload for about 300 cows or so.

Do you cover it up with something to keep it from the snow?

No.

It doesn't matter?

Well, it does. It gets wet a little bit, and it gets a little moldy, but they eat it. As long as you don't put it in the stack green—like alfalfa, if you put it in the stack green, it'll catch on fire. It ferments and it'll catch on fire. Wild hay, no, I don't think has ever caught on fire. But it rots in the stack. Rain from the top or

snow from the top just affects the top bales a little bit, and it's not a big deal.

Tell me again, you don't plant the hay, it's just natural?

Yes, it's native grass. Maybe fifty or sixty years ago, maybe somebody did plant something, but now it just keeps coming.

What is the season when it comes up?

We don't have any welts or anything. All the water that we irrigate with comes from the mountains, and we need winter snow for water to come from the mountains, which we haven't had for the last five or six years. But anyway, my dad flood irrigates all these fields, and he puts dikes in the river and backs the water out of the river and flood irrigates these fields. And he starts doing that in the first part of April or so. And then by the end of June, the first part of July, the hay is grown. And then he opens the dikes, or usually the water has dried up by then. But he opens and lets the water go down the river. And then we go in and we cut the hay, and it takes us, on an average year—not these last few years—but on an average year it takes us about two months to put the hay in the stack.

Would that be July and August usually?

Yes, July and August.

Now, who works with you on these vehicles?

Right now, my sister and I and my dad, and my mom helps a little bit now.

Let's go back to when you were first starting.

When we first started, we had a man that came from the Basque country, and he worked here for seventeen years.

Wow!

Yeah. He worked here for seventeen years. He run the mowing machine. And the same fellow we had here who worked for us fifteen years ago, we have here now, and he run the mowing machine too. And then we had another Basque fellow from Mom's hometown that run the rakes. After I moved up, then he moved into the rakes. And then my sister that went to college, he started running the mower.

That's Jackie?

Yeah, Jackie. When she was about fifteen, sixteen years old, she started mowing hay too, and she did all the way through her high school years. And then my youngest sister, being that she was kind of the baby of the family, she helped Mom until she got out of high school. [laughs] She was the kitchen help. She didn't like it too much, but that's what she was.

So would you take turns so that it wasn't only one person doing the job, when you were doing that haying?

No, it's a continuous process. Somebody's always cutting. There's hay always ready to be raked, and there's hay always ready to be baled. So every day you did your job.

You knew what your job was.

Yeah.

Did you like that? Did you enjoy that?

Yeah. Haying is not our favorite thing to do, because the days are long and they're hot and they're very monotonous. You know, you drive up and down all the time. But now we have modern convenienc we put on our Walkmans [laughs] and we go!

Are there any photographs of you working with this equipment? That's the kind of thing I'd like—working on the ranch.

We have pictures. I don't know if we have any sitting right on the equipment, but I'll look. We have pictures.

So now we have the haying and the rounding-up of cattle.

Well after haying, by the time we got done with the haying, the cattle were coming out of the mountains, down, already, on their own. So then we started puffing cattle into the fields that we just hayed.

How did you do that?

You go to the watering spots in these lower parts, and the cattle were usually bunched up there in the middle of the day. In those days, we run with the neighbors. The neighbors cows were mixed-in with our cows. So we would separate the neighbors cows out and put ours in, and then the neighbors would come get theirs and put theirs in. And that was an ongoing process until most of the cattle were in, in the fall. Then we run the cattle through the corrals, and we weaned the calves that are market size, that don't need a mother any more. And then we branded the calves that were born during the summer, and we get them ready for winter. Then we separate cows that we took the calves away from and

don't have a calf, and we send them to the winter range with no calves. That's what we used to do on an average year. But now that we've been in a drought for a few years, things have kind of changed. With the changes in the BLM and stuff, our whole process is kind of in an upheaval right now. We don't have a set routine any more. But that's what we used to do.

We're going to go back to what you used to do. And also again, for those who have never worked on a ranch, are the calves branded as soon as you bring them back so that they have your mark on them?

Yeah, like now when we're going up into the mountains, we run them through the corrals, and we brand the calves that are born in the springtime now.

Do they have to be a certain age to brand them?

No, it can be any time. I personally think that when you brand them when they're—not real young, like a couple of weeks old—but like a month old, two months old, it's better for the calf than to wait until it's older.

Do you do branding?

No, my dad has always done all the branding. We brand in the chute. A lot of people do the old-fashioned stuff.

You brand in the what?

In the calf chute. We separate all the calves from the mothers in the crop, and then we put them into the chute one-by-one and put the chute over it. A lot of people do it the old-fashioned style—you know, they rope the

calf and drag it to the fire. And it takes more people.

What does a chute look like?

There's one in the corral, you can see.
[chuckles]

Good, I'll take a picture of it!

They can't see it, but you can! [laughter]

I'll get a picture of it. And I also would like to see something that shows your family brand.

Okay. Our brand is a combined J-L, and the man that Mom and Dad bought this place from was St. John LaBorde, and that was his brand. He wasn't the Basco that started this, but he was here for fifty years before Mom and Dad.

So you've always used that brand?

Yeah, it's a clean brand that burns cleanly on the calf. So we've always kept that brand.

So would you be there at the branding, helping?

Yes.

How many more would be there during branding?

Well, when we were young, I don't remember partaking in it. We stood around and watched, like my daughter does now, but I don't remember helping in it at all when we were younger.

But when you were sixteen?

Even when we were sixteen. We brought the cows to the corral, but it was kind of a man's thing to do. The chute was iron, and you needed an iron arm to pull it, and to bring the calves in too. You know, we were kids and you didn't get behind. I wouldn't put my daughter behind them now, and we didn't get behind them either. We had men that did those things. I just remember watching when we were even fifteen and sixteen years old. It's not an everyday process—maybe you do it for three or four days spread out in the spring or three or four days spread out in the fall.

About once or twice a year?

Yeah, twice a year.

And then what would happen?

Then the cattle would get sorted for the winter: dry cattle go one way, and the pairs would be in bunches around here. And then the men would go feed them. We were in school then, and the men would go feed them.

And what about when you were out of school?

We had the sheep in those days.

You had sheep and cattle?

Yes, we had sheep and cattle. The things I'm telling you are things I remember during my time, when I was active in it. I'm sure before, my dad did things different too. You know, this ranching operation used to be mostly sheep, very few cattle. That's how it started. Then as years went by, it progressed to more and more cattle and a little less sheep. Then it kind of evened out, and it's still kind of even.

I want from your perspective.

I can't tell you what they did then.

That's all I want, because I have his interview. So at that time, after high school, did you work with the sheep then too?

Until my last year of high school, Dad run the sheep. And I remember going with him with the sheep in the wintertime, down in lone. We'd go down there and help him move the camp, and he had to haul water to the sheep sometimes. But he had two or three men here during that whole time that did the major part of the work. We just tagged along because we liked going.

Because you liked it?

Yeah, but not because we were a vital part of what was going on. It was just to tag along.

Okay, so the haying was a major responsibility, and helping with the cattle round-up?

Yes.

Were those the two major.

Even helping with the cattle round-up I'd say—at that time—was more of a kid's thing. I don't think we contributed too much to anything! Even my daughter I think does more now than we used to.

Really?

Yeah, I don't remember being a vital part then. Haying, we did, because when you got on that tractor, you didn't have no choice, you had to do what you had to do. You couldn't dilly dally somewhere. [laughter]

Did you help with putting up fences?

No, not then. Now we do, but not then.

Okay, so moving back, as your responsibilities grew, what were some of your other responsibilities? You had an awful lot already, but did you get into anything else in the ranching?

We helped Mom a lot. I remember making bread and stuff when I was in high school and stuff with Mom. But we didn't help with paperwork. We helped in the garden a little bit and stuff like that, but nothing that was major.

On a typical workday on the ranch as you were growing up, what time did you all get up?

My dad always gets up at daylight—it doesn't matter if it's winter [or summer]. In wintertime, he gets up before daylight, because the night's too long. And we did about the same. We'd have to be at school a little after eight—I think it was 8:15 a.m. when I was in school. And we would leave here, my Mom always said, "with breakfast fed to everyone and the dishes done." My sister would peel the potatoes for the day, and we all had our jobs. We were much more diligent then than we are now. Now my daughter barely gets out of bed to the table and to school! But then we had things, because Mom had a full day. And we had things that we had to have done before we went.

What time would you have to get up to start all that?

I don't remember.

Maybe 5:30 a.m.?

I don't remember, to tell you the truth. It never did seem a problem. [chuckles]

It was just your life.

That's right.

And when you were ranching, did you keep up with that schedule: get up real, real early with all the work to be done?

Yes.

Was Sunday a day when you didn't have to do all that?

No, there is no Sundays! [chuckles]

No such day!

No. We're not quite so tight any more. I don't know if it's because there's more of us and we kind of divide things up, but I know my daughter doesn't have near the responsibilities now that I had when I was her age, and my sisters had either. Things get more lax as you go along.

And more modern equipment?

Yeah, more modern.

I want to go back to high school: Where did your family get your shoes and your clothes and supplies?

Sears! Lots of stuff come from Sears. My mom gets the catalog, orders them, and they come home.

Did you pour over it? Did you have a choice in it? Did you sit and look at it?

No, my mom usually did.

It wasn't a great interest of yours?

No. My middle sister was kind of a clothes fanatic, but it didn't matter to me. It doesn't now, and it didn't [then] either. But I remember when the box would come from Sears—it was like Christmas! [laughter] Nice big box would come with our school clothes and we would be thrilled to death because we didn't dress up for anything else. School was a big deal.

Now your middle sister left, right?

Yeah.

Was she a different kind of a personality?

Yes.

Was that evident very early, that she was very different?

She liked it while she was here, but she wasn't as involved or as interested in what was going on around here. She just put in her time. She didn't pay any attention to what was going on. She always wanted to be a nurse—that was her thing. She had other ideas.

And the family let her follow that.

Yeah. I never wanted to go to college—nobody even asked me.

It wouldn't fit into your lifestyle at all.

No, it wouldn't. Probably down the line I might be sorry, but I didn't.

I don't think so.

Oh, you never know. Things are kind of changing. It never was even a consideration, no. But [for] my sister, it was. And when she graduated as a junior, she was sixteen—she went to college the next year. And she was young, she had a tough time, coming from a small, sheltered school, and being in the university. She had some tough years, but she finished nursing and got a job right away. But even the whole time she was going to college and stuff, she'd come home in the summertimes and put up hay. Every year she'd come back and it looked like it was harder and harder for her to come back. It just wasn't her thing.

Wasn't her lifestyle. Then going back to those days when you were growing up in your teens and twenties, did you work closely with your father?

Yeah, we were always here.

Partners. That's wonderful. Was there time for any recreation?

Not a lot. There isn't a lot. Maybe the first years out of school, I liked to go to town once in a while. But now I find the more you stay, the harder it is to go. And now I have absolutely no desire [chuckles] to go anywhere. But we force ourselves for Katrina's sake, because we don't want her to be backward, sheltered. So we go, but it's not a major priority. And recreation to me when I was a teenager was to go fishing. If I got the day off [laughing], I loved to go fishing!

Oh, tell me about that!

I haven't been in years. We have a small creek here, and that to me was a big deal if we got to go fishing. So we didn't ask for a lot.

Who took you fishing? Your dad?

And my grandfather was here.

Oh, I want to ask about that. When did you start fishing? How old were you?

We were about eight, nine years old. We'd go by hand, we didn't have a pole.

You're kidding me! Really?!

It's not legal! [laughs] Here, it don't matter, everything is legal here. But this little creek right here, and we'd go by hand.

What kind of fish?

Brook trout. They're only about eight, ten inches.

And then your family would cook it?

Well, I don't think they got too many meals the first times—we'd spend all day catching one fish! But as we got older, we got better at it, and we'd come home with thirteen, fourteen fish.

Did you go wade in the creek when it was hot?

Yeah. We'd have shorts and we'd go walk in the water and catch a fish under the banks.

Would that be you and your sisters?

Yeah, the three of us did.

What were some of the other things? What would you do evenings besides homework? I mean, when you were out of school, how were your evenings spent?

We didn't have TV. I know we didn't have TV until I was about ten years old. I imagine we read. I don't really remember doing anything.

Were there any games? Did you and your sisters play any board games or card games?

Later, but not then.

Probably went to bed—you were tired and went to sleep after your chores!

[laughs] Yeah. I don't remember doing any...I know my sisters, when I was thirteen, fourteen years old—my baby sister was into Barbies, and my middle sister played a lot too. I don't remember playing. I have always said that. I don't ever remember playing anything. [laughs]

And you were the oldest, so you didn't have an example.

No. There's pictures of us riding bikes and stuff, but all that's gone. It must not have been important. Not that I missed playing or anything—I just don't remember ever playing.

Now, I do know from your mother's interview that your grandparents came to visit. How old were you on their first visit? I know they came twice.

I think they came in 1964, so I was six or seven years old. That's when my grandfather came, and I remember him being here. He was a cranky man! [laughter] We used to tease him and make him mad. He'd shave—there was an open porch with a little partition in the back, it had a sink, and he used to shave in there. It had a latch from the outside, and every time he'd go in there, we'd latch him from the

outside and he couldn't get out! [laughter]
And I remember him being.

Would he yell?

Yeah, he'd holler at us from in there. But it didn't bother us any, because we'd do it again the next time!

Tell me about your grandmother.

She was really a precious lady. We really have fond memories. Maybe we have more fond memories of her because she came back in 1972 when we were a little older. But she was a dear lady.

Now when they came on that first visit when you were seven, of course they probably spoke Basque.

Yes, and I still speak Basque.

So you could communicate easily with them?

Yeah.

Can you remember very much about that first visit? We'll talk about the second visit later. How did it feel to have a grandmom and grandpop come and know they were your mom's parents?

My grandma looks a lot like my mom, so it wasn't hard to associate the two. It is weird for us, because you know we really don't have relatives like most people have relatives. We have them, but we never see them.

Yeah, kind of isolated.

Yeah. I know the last year I was in school, my uncle came—my mom's brother. And you

know, they stayed here about six weeks. I don't remember exactly how long. You know, he wanted me to call him "uncle" the whole time.

Oh, and you couldn't!

He was no more my uncle than the man on the street! [laughs] Really, I couldn't. Now he's been here last summer, and we're older, and so I had no trouble calling him uncle. Being a teenager, sixteen or seventeen years old, he wasn't my uncle! I didn't know him! [laughter]

Just some man.

But my grandparents, they were different:

That first visit, do you have any recollections in that first visit. It must have been amazing for them to see this place. Or were you too young on that visit?

I don't remember.

How old were you on the second visit when your grandmom stayed a year? She came alone, right?

Yeah, she came alone. Well, we can figure it out. [pause] I must have been twelve, thirteen years old.

So you were the age of your daughter.

Yeah.

And she stayed a long time?

She stayed a whole year.

So tell me a little bit about how your relationship with her developed and how it was.

I still think I'm my grandmother's favorite grandkid...But I remember killing chickens with her, like in the old country. She'd tell me which chicken to pick. I did a lot of things with my grandmother. My mom was busy. She had more time for us than my mom had then. And I remember my youngest sister trying to teach her how to speak English.

Aw. Did she learn some English?

Yeah, like "cigarette." My sister would make her say it over and over and over.

Did she smoke?

No, but my dad did then. And my sister liked the way my grandmother said "cigarette." It didn't sound like cigarette, [laughing] so she made her say "cigarette." I remember things like that. I don't remember doing a lot with her.

Did she become like part of the family?

Yeah. Oh, we were so sad to see her go.

Was she happy getting to know all of you?

Yes. She had a fun time here. Only her husband wasn't here, but she had a fun time here, and we always wanted her to come back, and she would have, had my grandfather not had a stroke. And then he was bedridden and she didn't want to leave him.

She couldn't, of course not.

She couldn't leave him. And then now, she's not able to go.

That's a shame.

Yeah, that's really sad, because she would have loved Katrina. I mean, she would have enjoyed her. And she was a dear lady.

And she'd have a wonderful, loving family around.

Yeah.

Do you communicate with her?

My mom does. I talk to her once in a while, but it's really hard to talk to my grandma now, because she's depressed and she cries the whole time we're talking to her. We can only talk on the phone.

You can't write, because of the language difference.

No.

Do you send pictures?

Once in a while, but that's hard on her too. I've never seen a lady cry as easy as my grandma. And so I don't talk too much to her any more. My mom does.

So we're going to come back to those years. Your middle sister went very early to college, so it was you and Eveline. So tell me some more of that period. Did Eveline then start working with you and your dad?

Well, Eveline graduated from high school and then I had Katrina those years and I wasn't married and we had kind of a tough time, that stretch. So Eveline missed one year of college. She stayed home.

To help you?

Yeah, to help here, because I couldn't do too much work. So Eveline stayed home and helped. And then she went to college after skipping a year. So she graduated as a junior, and then she stayed home a year, and then she went the normal time for her class to go, she went to college. And she was there and she started as a pre-vet major.

Oh, so Eveline left home too?

Uh-huh, she went to college. She's got a college degree.

Oh, so for quite a while it was you.

Yeah. But Eveline come home every weekend.

Oh did she?!

She never missed a weekend. She fixed her schedule so that she could go Monday through Thursday and Thursday nights come home, and then she had Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at home.

Were you thrilled to have your own little girl?

Yeah, it was nice. It was a hard time. It was really hard on my parents, but after all the smoke blew away..

It was a blessing for everyone.

Yeah. I can't imagine life around here without her now.

So that was a blessing.

Yeah, things work out. You think at the time they don't, but...

When you have a loving family, sure.

Yeah, that's exactly right, that's exactly right.

Which is most important.

Yeah.

When did you get back into ranching? Would your mom take care of Katrina?

Yeah, right away.

I'll be she was kind of thrilled to have a little granddaughter.

Yeah. It was weird for her, but everything fit right back in. And like you said, my parents were very, very—I was very lucky.

And it was a blessing—brought this life into the house. And also gave you something that has enriched your life.

Yeah all of our lives. She's not my kid, she's our kid. [laughter]

That's what I gathered from the interviews. Kind of the pet of the family.

Yeah, she's spoiled, that kid.

Beautiful girl.

But she's a good girl.

Well, she's good because of who surrounds her. I mean, you know, it's obvious. Okay, so then you got back into the ranching. Did the ranching start to change, or did your responsibilities start to change?

Well, as every year goes on, mine and my sister's responsibilities grew more. And then pretty soon we had only one man—he worked for us for twenty-one years. He herded sheep in the summertime in a tent, and in the wintertime he'd come help us feed hay. And he did that for four or five years, but he'd been here for twenty-one years. He left last year. He went to town. He wanted to try a town job. We got two shearers one year—they were both sixteen. They came from Spain when they were sixteen. And they stayed here for quite a few years, both of them, and then one of them ended up staying twenty-one years.

Wow.

So this was the only home he knew in America.

Oh gosh! Did he only speak Basque when he came?

Yes.

And you'd speak Basque to him?

Yes.

Did he learn English pretty quickly?

Yes, he spoke pretty good English. He couldn't even write Spanish. He came from the Spanish side, so Spanish was what they wrote in school and stuff. Well, he never went to school, he was from a real poor, isolated... Just real impoverished people. And so he came here, he didn't know how to write to his mother or anything. The other shearers helped him, wrote letters for him, and he learned. Even to read when he'd get a letter now, he would have to sound it out, read it out loud, sound

out every syllable. But he made good money here and he was here a lot of years. He saved everything. He even had a good chunk in the bank when he left here. So you know, for a man that had absolutely no education...

He was fortunate. Did he go back to live back in...

No, he went for visits a few times, from here. And now he's back there again visiting, but he's got a job in town, I guess, working in the school as a janitor.

Do some of these people get their citizenship?

Yes, some do, like my parents did, and a lot of others have too.

Yes, that's wonderful. And by then Eveline was home? She decided she was going to stay too?

Yeah, she graduated, and she has a degree in accounting.

Does she do the family books?

No! [laughs] She didn't like accounting at all! She missed her calling, she should have been a teacher. She's really good with kids. But she started a—a vet major.

That would be good!

Yeah, that would be good, but she's too soft-hearted to be a vet. You have to be kind of tough to be a vet. She doesn't even kill flies! She catches them and relocates them. If there's a fly in the house, I'm after it with the fly swatter, and she's trying to catch it to relocate it!

She's the one that tries to keep alive these new little leppie lambs?

Everything! She's the one that takes care of the little animals, and she's real kind-hearted, really a kind person. Being a vet, you know, if some kid walked in there with their dog that was dying, she wouldn't be able to do nothing! [laughter]

So who does the record keeping?

We have an accountant hired, and he does it. Things are way too complicated any more to do.

Oh yeah! Did the family ever get away off the ranch for any shopping excursions?

We do, we go to town. Maybe once a month, on the average, we get our hair cut in town and do our grocery shopping. A lot of stuff, clothes and things, Mom gets through the mail.

Still. But what about your shoes?

Shoes and stuff we get in town when we go. And my mom gets for Katrina a lot of stuff. I have hardly nothing to do with any of that stuff! [laughs] I didn't when I was a kid and I still don't! My mom does all those things. But so many mail order catalogs come that you can virtually do all but food from your house—which is convenient for us, because when we go to town, we go for the day.

You don't have time.

No, we don't. We don't go for overnight trips and three-or four-day trips. We go in the morning and come back at night. That whole time is like your day is planned to the letter. [laughs] So you have things you've gotta do. But we don't go very often.

Now what about medical care?

We were very, very lucky that we never had any mishaps as a kid. You know, anything we did have must not have been major because we didn't go.

Your mother could take care of it, and then you later could take care of it.

Yeah. In 1990, though, I got thrown from a horse and broke my back. That was major. [chuckles]

How was that handled?

Well, I had a compression fracture in my spine, and it shattered a vertebra in my lower spine. But we didn't know that at the time, and I got back into the pickup and I sat in the pickup while they finished out the day. And then in the evening, by the time we got home, I was in a lot of pain. So the ambulance come here, and they took me by ambulance to the Austin airport and flew me to Reno.

Oh, there's an airport there in Austin?

Yeah.

With private planes?

Yeah, there's private planes. It's got good runways. It's the county airport.

Oh, you're the first one who mentioned an airport there.

Oh really?!

So they flew you to the hospital?

To Reno. And my sister was a nurse and she was already married to a doctor, and so

they had everything lined up, and things just got blown [laughs] way out of proportion.

How long did you have to stay there?

I stayed in the hospital about a week, and then they put me in a back brace. They didn't operate, they stabilized the break, and I stayed in the brace for about two months. And they told me I couldn't do this, and I couldn't do that, and I couldn't do this.

Was that frustrating?

No, because I didn't pay any attention to them! [laughs]

Oh, you didn't pay attention to them! I thought you'd take advantage of the time to read!

No, then I did. I had to stay in bed at that time. But after I broke my back, they told me "You can't do this, and you shouldn't do that."

Oh, and you did it anyway. You can't live.

No, that's right, you can't live.

Didn't the expenses run up, having to use an airplane and all that? No insurance?

Yeah, it was a huge expense. Yeah, we have insurance.

And it covered that?

It covered a Jot. It didn't cover everything, but it covered a lot.

Did you have any problems with medical care when you were having your baby?

No.

No worries about that?

No. I went to Elko.

Plenty of time?

Yeah, we weren't worried. My mom had babies from here too.

Because I know when she had hers, she had some problems.

Yeah.

It was harder, also, with three children.

Yeah. But mine was easy.

No problem?

No.

How does your daughter and how does the family handle any health care?

When we have a major problem we go into Reno or Fallon or Elko, whichever one comes the handiest—but not very often. My daughter, I took her as a baby, but people do that—they panic when babies have something wrong with them. [chuckles] I took her as a baby, but she hasn't been in to see the doctor... She's prone to bloody noses and I have taken her a few times. They cauterized her nose a couple of times. But we handle everything right here.

What about a dentist?

The dentist too. Now she goes to an orthodontist. We went to Reno and now we go once a month to Winnemucca to see the orthodontist.

Do you ever stay over at your sister's? Or does your daughter stay over at your sister's in Reno ever?

Not very often, no. She went to camp a couple of years ago—we never did that either—but she went to a church camp in Lake Tahoe—not last summer, the summer before. And she had a good time. She wanted to go again right away, but the next summer rolled around and too many other things—she didn't want to go! She's going to miss riding, she's going to miss this, she's going to miss that. And now this summer she didn't even mention it. She started helping us ride and helping Grandma. She has a good life here, she doesn't need to go anywhere. And she wants to go spend a few days with my sister, and I'm sure she will this summer: go swimming and that.

When you said riding, did she start early riding a horse?

Not like we did, I don't think, but now this summer she rode a little bit.

Did she like that?

Yeah, she likes it.

And she helps you on the ranch? She's starting to help?

Oh, a little bit now.

She's still young.

Yeah, and she's a young, young.

Not like when you...

No, it's different now.

She's a normal young.

[laughter] She's normal! Oh, I don't know, kids now are much more—kids her age are way ahead of her. She's young.

That's good.

Yeah, that's good.

She doesn't have the influence of the violence on television.

No. She still likes to play. If she could find someone to play Barbies with her, she'd be out there playing Barbies all the time. But she stays young, she reads a lot. She's really smart in school. And I'm not saying that because she's my kid—she really is smart in school. But my mom pushes, which somebody has to. So my mom pushes and I do expect that from her. She can make things happen, but kids now don't have the same drive like we had. We were more self-motivated. Her, you have to be after her all the time. Her, you have to be after her all the time. Everything is much more relaxed: It is in school. Everything is more relaxed. Not relaxed more lax.

So I want to get back now: You have your little daughter and you're ranching. Did your life change very much in the time that you spent on the ranch or with your daughter?

No, we keep doing the same things—it just was added and you had to take care of Katrina too.

Did you go through some ups and downs on the ranch here? In other words, with the economy or with how many head of cattle, or with droughts? Was there any difficult period that was more complex than usual?

I think in those days we had more cattle. I know we had more cattle than we have now. We had quite a few sheep. My parents had quite a few payments to make, you know, on ranches and stuff.

Nothing that you had to deal with?

No, nothing at all. No, no. Now, we have no payments and things are easier now. We're very modernized.

You have a beautiful home.

Yeah, the house is fixed up. And the equipment outside are all geared to help you do with less people the same work that it used to take more people.

When the new equipment was being purchased, were you involved?

No, my dad does all that stuff.

He's a pretty bright man?

Yeah, he still does, though. We probably should, but we really don't pay any attention to the business end of things. We do the work. We know what's going on and things, but we don't tell him, "No, you shouldn't do that," or "we think we should do this." The man has made it this far, and I don't think he'd appreciate us sticking our nose in now!

Now in the house, which is such a beautiful home, did you have any input, or did your mother do all this?

My mom does it all, and I clean it.

[laughing] *You clean it?!*

Yeah, I clean it, that's my department. But my mom does all of it.

She's such an artistic woman.

Yeah. I have no...

That's not you....

No, I have no interest in that. I like what she does with it, and I appreciate good things, and I like to take care of good things, but as far as picking out something, I don't know.

So she's the one. She's very artistic. And what about Eveline?

She has a lot more taste than I do.

Does she have any input with your mom?

Well, they talk about things. I don't know if she's got any input...

It's mainly your mom.

Yeah.

Beautiful home.

Yeah, it is, it's a very nice house. Mom's got good taste.

Yes, wonderful woman. In the future, is the ranch one day going to be yours and Eveline's?

And my sister. It's a corporation now—my sister will have an equal...I don't know about "equal," but my other sister in Reno will have part too.

Yeah, Jackie. But you and Eveline will be the... Is it your plan in the future that this will always be your way of life?

Well, when I was, maybe even three or four years ago, if somebody said to me that we have to leave here, I would say, "Well, I'm staying here, you go." But now things are changing so much, and things are in such upheaval. There is no guarantees. I would say that we'll always be right here. But to say that things will be going the way they are now, there is no guarantees. Maybe we'll have just a handful of cattle. And then, a few years back, I would have just had a fit if somebody had told me something like that. But now it really doesn't bother me. I don't want to see Mom and Dad run themselves into the ground, fighting for something. They've done their time, and if worse comes to worse we can do something else. And I know—not bragging or anything—but I know that we are—both of us, my sisters—are able to adapt to whatever comes along and do whatever it takes to get by with whatever comes along. Now we don't want to see that happen, but if the time was to come, I wouldn't tell Mom and Dad, "No, let's stick it out."

You're strong.

We'll do what we have to do.

Sure. And are you seeing in your lovely daughter, any areas of interest where she might either want to stay in ranching or go into some other career?

She used to always say, "I want to be like Mommy," but I've talked her out of that. I said, "No, this.

[laughing] That's wonderful.

It's a good life, and it's a good life for us, but..., It sounds terrible saying it—I don't want to see her doing this. She's smart...

I see, you want her to have a different kind of a life.

Yeah, that's right. It's a hard life. You know, your body takes the punishment. It's fine and dandy, because that's what we've picked, and that's what we're doing, but I want her to have a choice where—she's very smart, she can do something else besides being out here. This is a good life. Maybe I'm totally wrong, wanting something else for her, because it's a healthy life: the air is clean, and the water is clean, and there's no violence around here, but it is a hard life on your body and you're not around...

The isolation.

Yeah. Neither my sister or I, we'll never get married. There'll be no...

There's no social life.

No, there isn't. And that's fine for us, because that's the way we are. But she should have another choice, another avenue. Maybe things would be different, but maybe they wouldn't be either, you know! I don't want to make it sound like it's bad, because it's not. It's what we wanted, it's what we picked, but I don't want her now at twelve years old telling me, "I want to be like you." "You gotta try something else. If you come back around, then that's fine and dandy. But you gotta try something else."

Good mother.

Well, I don't know about that! We might fight too much if she hangs around.

That's wonderful. She has added so much, because now you have a future with her too.

Yeah, that's right. I just can't imagine what life would have been like around here if we didn't have her.

A young spirit.

Yeah. Like my paren my dad was a hard-nose when we were growing up—boy, we had rules! But with her, you yell at her, you get in trouble! [laughter] Even at the table, you try to correct her manners, it's you that's got the bad manners—hers are fine!

I've heard a little bit that you have a lot of visitors that come here, because you're such a loving warm family, and I know how much I love to come. I can imagine anyone [would love to come visit your family]. Who are some of the visitors who have come or stayed over? Tell me a little bit about the flow of people that have come into your lives and come into your home.

We've had a few relatives come—not a lot: my dad's brother and sister have come with their respective parts of family. And my mom's brothers have come, two of them. Last summer we had two of mom's brothers here. There's always a few Basque people from the Basque country that are making their tour around here, and they somehow find our door. [laughter] And that's nice for Mom and Dad, they enjoy that. And there's always a few Basque people from California on their way to a picnic, or driving through. that they knew from before, or they met here, that come. And then we have friends from Elko and Battle Mountain that come. And they like coming here because it's a relaxed...Or I don't know, they like coming here.

I know why! [chuckles]

I don't know what the deal is. But anyway, people come on a regular basis, and there's always... We don't lack for company. You know, we say we're isolated, but there's always people around!

That's wonderful! Now, is there anything more that you can share that would shed any more light on what your life as a young woman and as a rancher is like, that would help anyone understand what your unique life is about?

I don't know what specifically you want me to tell you, but I know one thing: Now, in this day and age, I think it would have been a really smart move to have a college education. You have to be up on everything now, to keep up with government changes and all those things. I think the years are gone where we could just happily go along doing what we did every day, and minding our own business. I think now you have to participate, and I don't like any of that stuff. You have to participate in more meetings and a lot more of...

Oh, studying the new regulations?

Yeah, and being up so you can fight this law or...

Go in front of the commissioners...

Yeah, I think that's what it's coming to. And that's because I don't like that, and I know Eveline doesn't. But I think that it's...

Oh, you're worried who's going to handle that?

Yeah. It's too bad that things don't stay the same, things change. And we were happy, we do the work easy. The work we have to do is

nothing compared to the hassles that we have to go through.

Did it affect you when the county seat moved to Battle Mountain?

No.

That didn't affect you at all?

No. It made people in town kind of... But it don't matter to us.

Well, do you have anything else to share before we end this interview?

No, I think it went easy.

You gave me so much new information, so I want to thank you so much on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, and this is the end of the interview.

Thank you.

PAULINE INCHAUSPE
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



KATRINA AND PAULINE INCHAUSPE, MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

PAULINE INCHAUPE

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MARY JARAMILLO**PREFACE**

Mary Jaramillo's father, Jose Ontiveros, was born in the State of Jalisco, Mexico. He migrated to the United States as a young man, and while in California, hearing about work on the ranches in Nevada, he went to Elko where he worked as a sheepshearer and buckaroo on ranches. Ultimately, he came to Battle Mountain where he was hired as a sheepherder by the W. T. Jenkins Company and Joan Saval. Mary's mother, Sophia, also born in Mexico, migrated to the United States with her first husband who was contracted to work in the beet fields in Idaho. They later moved to Nevada when he got a job on the railroad. After his death at an early age, Sophia, who had two small children, married Jose Ontiveros. Nine months later Mary was born and three years later sister Connie was born.

Spanish was the language spoken in their home, even after the children learned English at school. Although there were not many Mexican families in Battle Mountain, Mary and her family did not experience

discrimination. The family did not retain the Mexican culture, except for the Spanish language at home and some of the foods.

Mary's father's work as a sheepherder took him away from home most of the time. Eventually he decided to come home to stay with the family and got a job on the railroad. When the children were older, Mary's mother worked as a domestic to help support the family. Mary's first job was polishing stones in a turquoise shop summers and weekends during her junior and senior high school years. After graduation, Mary married and had a daughter and son. She describes life at Argenta where her husband worked on the railroad and at Copper Canyon when her husband worked for one of the gold mines. When the mine closed, they moved to Battle Mountain where her husband bought a bar and a variety store which Mary managed. She also worked seven years at Dale's Drugs where she "did a lot of the buying...everything but the drugs."

Mary and her husband divorced. Barite mining was booming and Mary decided to

look for a better job with benefits. In 1974 she was hired to work in a barite lab, the start of a long career with barite mines, working for Milwhite and Milchem, commuting to Argenta, until 1984. For a short time she was hired to do payroll for the hospital until Tenneco Mining Company came into the area in 1985 and hired her to work at the McCoy gold mine as receptionist and handling payroll. The company kept growing, and Mary was responsible for hiring new employees. Echo Bay purchased Tenneco in 1986. Mary's daughter Gloria starting working for Echo Bay as a buyer for the purchasing department about 1988.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Mary Jaramillo in an office at the Lander County Courthouse, Battle Mountain, Nevada. The date is September 17, 1993.

Good morning, Mary. I'm so glad that we finally have a date to interview you. Can you give us your full name?

Mary Jaramillo: My name is Mary Jaramillo.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in Battle Mountain on December 17, 1929.

I want to know a little bit about your parents. Can you tell me first about your father, where he was born and what he did before he came to the United States?

My father was born in the State of Jalisco, Mexico. I don't know too much about what he

did before he came to Nevada. He came as a young man. I believe he was nineteen years old when he came into California.

Can you give us his name and spell it please.

Yes, his name was José Ontiveros.

And then tell me about your mother: first her name and where she was born.

My mother's name was Sophia [Martinez]. She was born in Mexico City, Mexico.

Did they meet in Mexico?

No, my mother and father met here in Battle Mountain. My mother was previously married.

I want to start slowly with your father and whatever he told you about what brought him to the United States and what finally brought him to Battle Mountain.

Well as far as I can remember, my father's mother. actually, my grandmother died at his birth. So his aunt raised him—his aunt and his father. He lost his father shortly after, and so his aunt raised the family until he was—I guess maybe he had some wanderlust in him, and he decided to migrate to the United States.

Did he know anyone here?

No he didn't. He knew no one.

Did he ever tell you, was it a problem to migrate to the United States in those days?

No, no problem at all.

Where did he first go? Did he tell you?

He came into the State of California. However, he did not like California, and he met a gentleman by the name of Mr. Granillo. This gentleman mentioned to my father that there was work on the ranches in Nevada, and also sheepshearing. My father didn't know anything about it, but he decided he had to do something, so he came to Nevada, to Elko first, and he went into sheepshearing.

Did he come alone?

With this gentleman.

How long did he stay in Elko working with the sheep, do you know?

He stayed in Elko quite a few years in that area working as a sheepshearer and then he got work on the ranches as a ranch hand, buckaroo. Ultimately he came to Battle Mountain as a shepherd.

Was tie with the Jenkins?

Yes he was. He was with the Jenkins outfit and also he worked for Mrs. Saval, Mrs. Joan Saval.

Did he hear about it or did they entice him to come here? How did he get out here?

No, I believe he heard about it. Since work in the Elko area had diminished at that time, he came to Battle Mountain.

Did he ever tell you when he was working in Elko, were there others from Mexico? Did he make friends or did he mingle with the society? Did he ever talk about that?

Not too many Mexican friends. Apparently they didn't work in that field, but he met a lot of Basco [Basque] and Spanish friends.

Did he speak English when he came?

No he didn't.

Did he learn English, or did he speak the Spanish language with those who understood it?

He spoke Spanish with those who understood Spanish, and then he did learn to speak English—brokenly, but he spoke English.

That's so interesting. Where and when did he meet your mother? Do you know?

Right here in Battle Mountain.

She was born in Mexico. How did she come to Battle Mountain, do you know?

Yes, my mother was married in Mexico to a Mr. Sanchez. And after my grandmother's death, they both migrated to the United States.

The same way that your father did?

No, I believe they came with a contractor who was contracting in the fields—in the beet fields in Idaho. They landed in Idaho, they worked there for a while and then they moved to the Salt Lake area, and after that work was finished, they moved to Nevada to work on the railroad. Mr. Sanchez worked on the railroad.

When they moved to work in the beet fields, did the owners go down to Mexico to lure workers?

Yes, I believe they did.

Uh-huh, that's interesting. So they lived in Battle Mountain?

Yes, uh-huh. They lived in Battle Mountain and then Mr. Sanchez had family in Mexico, and they wanted him to return to Mexico, they had some acreage there for him to farm. In the meantime, my brother was born here, and she was pregnant with my sister, Julia. So they moved to Mexico and they were there for just a short period of time when her husband died. And so she decided that she did not like Mexico, she wanted to come back to Battle Mountain and she had some friends here. And she was all alone, she had no sisters or brothers or anything, so she decided to come back and she arrived here like on a Monday and maybe on that weekend, my sister was born.

What a brave, brave woman. She was a strong woman?

Yes.

Uh-huh. So then your dad met her here in Battle Mountain, and then there were two little children?

Yes, my father had asked her to marry him and she had her doubts, because she was afraid someone was going to abuse her children and she just didn't want that, so she was hesitant. Finally she decided that she would marry him.

Do you know what year they married?

I think it was in 1928.

And how old were the children by then?

My sister was a little over a year old, my brother was about three.

So in all essence, he was the daddy?

Yes.

Did he adopt them?

No, not legally, but they always went by his name up until the time my sister married and my brother went into the service.

Did they marry in Battle Mountain?

Yes, they did.

Do you know where they first lived?

I don't know where they first lived, no.

Now your dad was still working for Jenkins when, he married? The sheepherder?

I don't believe he was working for Jenkins then, because I guess he was still lookin' for steady work, and he found work on the railroad for a very, very short time, and they moved to Palisade, which is east of Battle Mountain. And neither one of 'em liked it there, so my dad decided to bring my mother back home, back to Battle Mountain, and he had previously boughten this land here in Battle Mountain and he decided to build her a home. In the meanwhile, he rented from Mrs. Oyarbide for them to live in. And the house was built which was just a very small two-room house that he had somethin' for her anyway.

Where was that located?

Right at the—it's on North Second Street.

Right smack in the middle of town. How long after they were married were you born?

I believe probably nine months.

And were you the only child from that marriage?

No, I have another sister Her name is Connie.

How much older are you than Connie?

Three years.

I want to go to your very earliest memories. First, I want to know about your home life. Was Spanish spoken in your home?

Yes, it was. We all spoke Spanish until the time we went to school. And then we just spoke English and Spanish both at home.

Let's see, there was Julia and Manuel. Did they learn to speak English in school too?

Yes.

All of you dad. Once you started school and spoke English, did you still speak Spanish in the home?

At home, yes.

Were there other Mexican families here that your family befriended?

There were probably a total of, that I know of, three other families.

Were you close because of your culture and language?

To one family in particular we were, yes.

When you went to school—we'll get into the school days—since there were not very many children from Mexico, how were you treated?

How did the other children and teacher accept you and your brother and sisters?

As far back as I can remember, there was no discrimination at all.

Oh, good to hear that. Good.

None at all.

None because of the language?

No, because when we learned to speak English fluently, and since there was just so few of us, I was the only Mexican girl in my class, and I was treated just like anyone else.

So you had the same friends. I want to go back into your home, When you were born, were you in that little two-room house?

That's where I was born, yes.

What was your family life like? I want to know a little bit about your dad as a father and a family man and a husband. Besides his work, what was his personality like?

He was exceptional. I have to say that. I don't believe he ever, ever spanked any of us. He was \$g good natured up until the time he died. He would have go leave the house to go to work. He was shepherding' then and he'd leave in the spring, I believe it was, and then come back through the tall and maybe spend two or three days at home and go back out again. But on all his trips home, he would make sure that my mother had everything at home for us. In the winter, he made sure that we had enough coal 'cause that was our main heating, and he would order just tons and tons of coal. We had this big coal shed and he would have plenty of wood kindling for my

mother and he would make sure that—well, his paycheck came to her. He just had Mrs. Marvel deliver the check to her. So she took care of all the financial arrangements and our needs.

And so he probably worked with a lot of the Basque shepherders?

Yes he did.

And then with your mother responsible for all of you and your dad gone so long, what was the home life like? Did you have regular chores to help her? What kind of things did you have to do when you were young?

Yes, when we were young, we helped my mother. We cleaned the house, we did dishes. She never really let us cook too much because she was afraid we'd get burned on a coal stove, I guess. And even as we grew up, we didn't do too much cooking at home. But we did the washing, and in those days we used the scrub board. I remember we had to heat water outside in big tubs so we could do the washing and for bathing purposes also—in the summer especially, so she wouldn't heat up the house.

What would you do about drying clothes when the weather was either snowy or rainy? What would you do?

My mother always hung outside until they at least half-dried and then she would bring them inside to dry—while we were at school apparently because I don't remember any clothes hanging around in the house.

Now, did you maintain a culture from your family's native country of Mexico in your home, in the food or holidays?

That I can say we didn't, and I'm real sorry, because my mother and father had lived here in the United States so much that we never did maintain any of the culture, except for the Spanish language at home.

None of the foods?

Well, tortillas. My mother made tortillas of course. No, I don't think so.

Did they ever go back to visit the family in Mexico, or did their family ever come to visit here?

No, both my parents lost their families while they were young, while they were still in Mexico, so my dad attempted to go back at one time and didn't make it to his hometown. My mother made several trips back to Mexico City, but it was all changed and she had no relatives or friends there, so she didn't.

Was that when you kids were bigger?

Yes.

Now, did your dad stay in the shepherding? I think you said he was moving out of it? or did he finally find something steady?

No, he worked in shepherding most of the time up until the time my brother went into the service and then he decided he had to come home to stay with us, so then he got a job on the railroad and he had that for probably about ten years only.

Do you know what he did on the railroad, did he ever tell you?

No, what all railroad men did. I have no idea. They helped change the rails and just the maintenance of it.

Was that all here in Battle Mountain?

Yes, it was.

I want to go back now to your school days and your earliest recollections. First about Battle Mountain. Did you ever go down to Austin on that little train for any Fourth of July holidays?

No, I don't remember that at all, in fact I think the train was probably dismantled by the time I was aware of it. I'm not sure when that train was there.

Did you spend all of your childhood right here in Battle Mountain?

Yes, I did.

Tell me when you started school and as you started to get into teenage years, what kind of activities did the kids get involved with and did you have a special group of friends? What did you do? Did you have time for fun and socializing?

Not really. We went to school. We had our activities at school, we played a lot of tennis—my sister and I made wooden paddles at home and we played right out on the street until my mother afforded to buy us tennis racquets, and we did play a lot of tennis in the summer after we finished our chores, we'd come up here to the school. In fact where this building is now is where the tennis courts were, and we played a lot of tennis. Just around the neighborhood, cause my mother never let us wander. She decided we had to stay at home. Every once in a while we'd sneak away from her. After we were half-way grown, she decided she had to go to work to help support the family, so she worked as a domestic. She worked for a Mrs.

Licking, for the Licking Ranch. And then she worked for Mrs. Saval and Mrs. Marvel.

Now were their houses here in Battle Mountain?

Yes they were.

And would she do the cleaning and laundry?

Yes.

How old were you when your dad finally came back to stay to work for the railroad, do you remember?

I was probably twelve or thirteen, maybe fourteen.

Everybody was probably quite thrilled to have him home?

Yes we were.

Did your family life change when he came home?

No, not really.

Were there family recreation times when all of you did some things for recreation?

I really can't remember.

Did your brother and dad ever have time for fishing or hunting?

No. My brother later on would go fishing with his friends, but my dad never went.

He was too busy working all the time. And your mother sounds like she was real busy. Was she doing the domestic work after your father was home too?

Yes. She continued to do that.

So there wouldn't be too much time. And did you girls all pitch in to help more when she was working when you were older?

Yes.

Now as you were going into high school, what were some of the areas of studies that you began to see that you took to and might want to do more of that work when you got out of school? Did you begin to develop specific areas of talents and interest in high school? subjects you liked more than others?

I always did like English and history and I wasn't very domesticated, although I had to take home ec[onomics] and I did learn a lot, Mrs. Lamaire, Eleanor Lamaire, was my home ec teacher and she taught me a lot about cooking, canning—that's where I got all my basics, was from Eleanor.

Did you have any aspirations of what you might want to do after high school?

No I really didn't. I wanted to work, but I didn't really have anything in particular.

Did you begin to date in high school?

No.

No? No dating in high school?

Uh-uh.

Because of strict parents or because you weren't interested?

Well, because of strict parents, and then really none of the boys interested me I suppose—as friends yes.

Did you go to dances?

Yes, we had high school dances that we went to. And of course the junior prom and the senior ball. We went to all of those.

And you graduated high school?

Yes.

And then what did you do?

After I graduated, I worked for a short while before I married. I worked for a turquoise shop. I used to polish stones.

Oh, how interesting. Did they teach you, or had you done any?

No, I was taught.

And who ran that shop? Do you know whose shop it was and where?

Yes, but I can't remember his name now.

When you think of it, I'll fill it in. It was a shop where they sold turquoise jewelry, or what?

No, they worked with the crude turquoise. The man cut the stones and I sanded and polished them.

Did you like that?

Yes, it was very interesting.

It sounds very interesting. How long did you work there?

I worked there for about—well I started working there during my school years.

How did you find that job?

Well this man came over to my house one day and wanted to know if I wanted to work. I said "Yeah!" I didn't know what work was but I decided I wanted to work. And I went to work for him and I worked, I think it was my junior year in the summertime and sometimes on weekends, and same for my senior year.

Were you allowed to keep the money to save?

I gave most of it to my mother. She would allow me to have some for spending and then I gave it to her, or I would buy gifts for them.

So how long did you work with the turquoise?

Total about maybe nine months.

And then what happened?

Then after I graduated from high school, I believe I was working for a fast food place. They didn't call 'em fast food places at that time, but that's where I was working, and it was located right next to the Shell station, which is the Quick now. And Maude...I can't remember her last name now—ran the place and I would come in and work for her.

What did you do?

I cooked hamburgers and just everything.

Waited on customers?

Waited on customers, uh-huh.

How long were you there?

I was there probably just during the summer, I think it was.

Now during this period of high school and working, what kind of changes did you observe in Battle Mountain? How had it changed, or how different was it from the time you were a little girl?

Well, it had grown some. I remember we had two butcher shops which was something for those days. We had two clothing stores and several cafes. I decided I wanted to work in a cafe one year and my mother kept insisting that I didn't, but I wanted to give it a try. I worked one night, and that was enough for me.

Which cafe?

That was the Owl Cafe. I guess it was called the Owl.

Was Carmen Hinman there then?

No, Thelma and Dinty Welch had that at that time.

Before the Hinmans.

Yes. And I worked one night and I decided I did not want to be a waitress. That was hard work.

During the war years, you said your brother went into the service.

Yes he did.

Did he enlist or was he drafted?

I believe he was drafted.

How did the war years effect your family and your life?

We were issued food stamps. I remember that—I don't know what organization it was,

but they distributed food to the poor, and of course we were considered poor. I don't know what organization it was though. And I remember that at the old high school they had—also our organization was giving out clothing, and we'd go over there and were fitted for dresses or skirts or something like this, and then my mother would take them home and alter them for us. But I don't remember who it was that did this.

Had the community changed because so many fellas had to leave to go to war? Did it open up more jobs for women? Did it affect the city?

I wasn't aware of anything like that.

You weren't aware of anything like that, that there were dramatic changes. Then you were working in this food place and then what did you do, how did your life evolve from there?

I believe at that time I met my children's father. I don't even remember when I met him, it's been so long. But anyway, we married.

Here in Battle Mountain?

Here in Battle Mountain.

Was he in your school?

No. He had come from New Mexico and he came to visit an aunt and uncle. We met and we married and we had two children.

What years were they born?

My daughter Gloria was born in 1949, and my son Gilbert was born in 1950.

You were a busy lady.

Yes, I was.

How old were you then, when you married and had your kids?

I was eighteen when my daughter was born, Right after high school.

Oh, my goodness.

And graduated in 1947.

What'd your mom think?

Well, she wasn't very happy but...

She loved the kids?

Yes, oh yes. My goodness yes.

Where dad you live?

My husband got a job on the railroad and he worked there for about six months and we lived in a place called Argenta was just about fifteen miles out of town. Was a railroad section. And we lived there for just a short while, then he went to work for one of the mines which is now Battle Mountain Gold, and we moved there and lived there until 1951, I believe it was, when the mines were shuttin' down.

Was he older than you?

Just six months.

I want to go back to Argenta because I think you're the first one that I know that lived there—that I know about, I should say. What was it like?

It was just—two other families lived there besides the single men that worked on the railroad.

What did you live in?

We had a nice little home. It was a two-story home. Two bedrooms and the living room, the kitchen, and we had a nice yard. We didn't have inside plumbing, so I had to carry water for washing clothes. My baby Gloria lived out there with us at that time so I had to carry water for doin' her laundry.

And did you have transportation?

Yes, uh-huh.

Did you have a car?

Yes I did.

So you could get into Battle Mountain to see your family.

Yes.

I read that when the railroad opened in Battle Mountain, they physically moved the structures from Argenta to Battle Mountain, but apparently there was still small activity there when you were living there.

Yes, they hadn't moved the railroad structures in. It was still there.

When you had your baby, your first child, what were the medical conditions in the Battle Mountain area?

I guess there was a doctor here. But I wasn't very comfortable with him so I went to Winnemucca to have her delivered.

Did you know anyone there?

The doctor.

How did you meet a doctor in Winnemucca?

I think my mother knew him.

Okay.

He had doctored here in Battle Mountain before. His name was Dr. Lin Felder

And were you able to make it in time to Winnemucca?

Oh yes.

Or did you stay there ahead of time?

No I didn't.

This was on a Wednesday, I believe, when my daughter was born. She was born prematurely, and I just started havin' labor pains I guess it was, so my husband took me to Winnemucca and she was delivered there. She weighed four pounds when she was born.

Oh my! But she came through okay?

Yes, uh-huh.

Now your son, I see, was born in Battle Mountain.

In Battle Mountain. By that time, we had a doctor here. His name was Dr. Charles Hyde.

And there was the hospital?

And we had a little hospital on West Third Street. I don't know the exact address, but yes, he delivered my son. He was a very, very, good doctor.

Oh good, 'cause I know there are medical problems in more rural areas.

Yes.

Okay, so move on in your life to the next step. You were in Argenta and then how long after did you move back to Battle Mountain?

We moved back to Battle Mountain in 1951 from Copper Canyon after the mining closed down here. From Argenta we moved to Copper Canyon.

I see, to Copper Canyon. Did you live there at Copper Canyon?

Yes, uh-huh.

Did you know anyone there when you were there?

Let's see, Bob Raring was the manager. I don't remember who the other supervisors were. But his wife—she was a Battle Mountain girl, incidentally—his wife lived there and since I was quite younger than the rest of them, they kind of took me under their wing.

Oh good, good.

And they would have card parties, and I knew nothing about cards, and I still don't, and they would invite me to their card parties.

What did you do with the kids?

My husband stayed home with them.

Oh, this was the evening.

Yes, so I would go and try to learn how to play cards and I never had any interest in it, so I never could learn to play cards.

About how many families were out there in Copper Canyon when you were there?

Oh there were several. There must have been maybe twenty families. It was really nice. Later on, my sister moved out there after she got married. Her husband was working' in the mines.

While you were there?

Yes.

Oh how nice.

Uh-huh, it was really nice.

So how long were you at Copper Canyon?

Oh, probably...Maybe not quite a year.

Can you describe what it was like, what the little mining community was like?

Oh it was so nice. It was so peaceful. We had a commissary where we could pick up things that we ran out of before we came to town, and all the community was so friendly. We had a regular post office where we could go down and pick up our mail and it was just really nice. I really enjoyed it out there. It was really friendly. We'd have baseball games. The community would get together and play baseball.

The adults played in it?

Uh-huh.

Did you play in it?

Oh yes, yes.

Uh-huh.

How were they doing?

Did your husband play in it?

They were doing very well. My mother would come and visit us or I would take the children over to visit with her. Almost every day they saw her.

Yeah.

Sounds like fun.

Now in your family home and after you came back and the kids were near your family, did you celebrate holidays together?

It was very fun.

Yes we did.

Beside the commissary, were there boarding houses for the single men?

What holidays?

Yes I believe there was one. It was attached to the commissary.

Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Fourth of July I believe we did too. I can't remember too much about the Fourth of July when my children were small, but I suppose we did, went on picnics for the Fourth.

So then that mine closed too?

Uh-huh.

Did you stay home and take care of the kids when they were little?

Okay then what?

So then we came back to Battle Mountain.

Yes I did.

Where did you live?

And then what's the next phase of your life? How long did you stay in this place with your two young children near your parents?

We lived on Second Street. It was an apartment house—two apartments, and we rented one of those. We lived there—I don't know what the name of the street, it's on Second Street. right across from the Silver Dollar Bar now, and we lived there and our next door neighbor were Battle Mountain people too, the Broyles. Bill and Loraine. Our children were about the same age and they played together, we visited often.

We stayed there probably two years or so, and then my mother had a rental near her, it was across the street from her, and so she decided that we probably should rent that 'cause we wanted to save to build a home.

Did you see your parents a lot when you came back?

Was this property that your father had originally purchased?

No, later on he had purchased it.

So later he did better and could purchase property?

Uh-huh. And so we moved there and that's where my children grew up most of the time. And then finally my husband built my present home.

And what year was that when you moved into this home?

That was in the sixties.

So your children by then were...

They were in high school.

As they were growing up in the school, were there changes in the schools when they went, compared to when you went to school?

Oh yes, they offered a lot more in the schools. They both took up band, which we didn't have.

What instruments?

My daughter played the trumpet and my son played the saxophone.

Did they have parades?

Oh, yes. And my daughter was very well into music. She also earned to play the piano and she wrote a lot of the music for the band teacher.

She composed?

The school at that time was short on money and some of the instruments didn't

have music so she'd have to write the music for the different instruments and she conducted a band.

Oh my, was she born with this talent?

Yes. She certainly didn't get it from me, 'cause I'm not musically talented at all. They both did very well in band, and they were in sports—my son was in sports all the time. As he was growing, he was in Little League and he did very, very well in Little League in baseball. I believe he even broke one of the Nevada state records as a pitcher in baseball. There was a state tournament in Yerington, and the team played Sparks and they started at eight o'clock in the evening, I remember, and they played until one o'clock the next morning and we lost it by one run. They had to take my son out because of the rules. He pitched, I think it was six complete innings and hadn't lost—no one had scored on him, but after they took him out, we lost by one run.

Now were your children accepted as readily as you were in the school?

Oh yes, no problem.

There was no discrimination in Battle Mountain?

There was no discrimination at all, that I could ever see.

That's wonderful to hear. Were there Indian children in the classrooms as well?

We had one Indian girl in our class, and I'm sure my kids had some. My daughter had one boy that I know of, and I think my son had some too but I can't remember for sure.

Were there any black children in the school?

No. You know when we were growin' up, there was a black family, in fact he was some kind of an operator at the railroad depot at that time, and his grandchildren, I believe the boy was in my class or maybe a class behind me and the girl was up ahead some years. but they came over to play with us and with all the neighborhood.

So there was no discrimination against any kind of any outsiders as there are in many places today?

No, uh-uh. It was very fortunate for us to grow up here.

Wonderful to hear, 'cause as we know it isn't the same way all over the county.

Oh, I know it, not anymore.

It's important to have this interview to show the atmosphere here. Now, when your children finished high school, let's start with your daughter, Gloria: What did she do when she finished high school?

She went on to school. She wanted to major in music. She went to the University.

Which one?

Nevada, Reno, and she went one year and then she decided she didn't want music, that she wanted nothin' but music. But she did get into the University band her first year there. So then she went into business school there in Reno, and she took up court reporting and did very well in that. And then after that, she was offered a job with the court systems.

The county court system?

No, the federal, and she worked—it was the judicial system is what she worked for, in Reno. They were based in Lake Tahoe really, but she worked in Reno. And she did a lot of traveling with this outfit. She went to New York, Florida—just all over. They were redoing the court systems themselves.

She must be very bright.

She is very talented. And then she worked there for a long time then she got burnt out with it. She said she couldn't believe that it was so much negative sides to the courts and she just couldn't take anymore so she came home. And at present, she's workin' for Echo Bay—she's a buyer for the purchasing department at Echo Bay.

Now tell me what Echo Bay is.

Echo Bay is a gold mine and that's where I was employed.

When were you employed at Echo Bay?

I'm still on their payroll, I'm on disability.

Let's move back in your life to, who started first, your daughter or you at Echo Bay?

I did. I started.

Okay, so let's go back and tell me when you did start.

In the interim, my husband and I were divorced, and then I went to work—I worked.

What year? I mean what year did you start to go back to work?

Well before our divorce, I worked at—my husband had, after he came back from Battle

Mountain Gold, I mean Copper Canyon, then he got into business for himself. He got a bar.

What was the name of the bar?

The Silver Dollar. And then he bought into a variety store and I managed that.

Where was that?

Right here on the corner where the present Owl Motel is. Right there. There was a Corner Bar and then there was the variety store. So he had the Silver Dollar and then he bought into the Corner Bar after John Williams had it.

I remember in John Williams interview he tells about that.

And then I had the store and I managed that.

How old were your kids then?

They were in probably freshmen in high school—freshman and sophomores in high school.

Did you like that job?

Yes, I did. I worked with the public and I liked that. And we had a good business there and from that business is how we built our home, so it was very lucrative. After that, when we sold out the business—I just couldn't take the business anymore. It was just too hard to try to manage my kids.

Oh, and your home.

Yes, and I always wanted to attend all of the functions that my kids were in, and fortunately

I was lucky enough to have a husband that didn't care at that time. I did go to most all the functions while they were in school. And so then we sold out the business and he kept the Silver Dollar and I went to work at the drug store.

The same drug store that's there?

It's called Dale's Drugs, but Dale Malmgren was the owner at the time. I worked there for seven years.

What did you do?

I was just a clerk and I did a lot of buying for him.

Like what kinds of things did you buy?

Everything but the drugs.

So you can't say "just a clerk." You had a very responsible position.

Yes, uh-huh.

What were your hours of work?

I worked from noon to eight in the evening.

And can you tell me what they paid you in those days?

Minimum wage probably, which was \$3.75, I believe. Something like that. It was very, very, little but.

Did they give you health insurance?

No.

Did your husband have health insurance?

No he didn't.

No health insurance.

No, uh-uh. Fortunately I wasn't sick at the time, or my children either. Then, I worked there for seven years.

Now through those seven years, working with the public and ordering goods, what kind of changes in the economy and population could you observe in those seven years through the kind of work you were doing? The flow of what kind of people were coming in? Was there mining? Were there new people coming in?

Yes. Barite was startin' to pick up at that time, barite mining. Yeah, a lot of new families were comin' in at that time.

Did they get busier in the drug store?

Oh yes. Especially during the holidays. It was real busy, very busy. We had, oh I don't know...

Was this in the seventies? Late sixties?

Late sixties, early seventies.

What were some of the things that you were ordering that might be new as the time changed and new people came? Do you remember the kinds of things they would stock to meet the needs of the population?

No, I don't. Just everyday things. All the sundries. Everything. I don't remember anything in particular.

But on the holidays?

Yes. The toys and all the men's gifts and women's colognes. We kept up with all the

new stuff that came on the market. Mr. Malmgren would get for the store. He sent his wife and I to the different shows that the companies had.

Oh, what fun.

Yes. Then he went with us on one trip to Las Vegas for a—I don't remember what kind of show that was, but we picked out a lot of nice things for the holidays.

So that was enjoyable.

Yes. I enjoyed working for those people. They were very, very nice.

So that was seven years, you said.

Uh-huh.

That went into the seventies. Were your children still at home, both of them?

No, they were gone.

I don't want to interrupt your work, so we'll get back to the children—they're not children anymore—your son and daughter. later. After that seven years then what did you do?

Then there was the mining company that was here. It was called Milwhite.

I hadn't heard that name before.

And they were mining barite, and at that time I decided that I had to look for something that paid a little more money and something that had benefits, so I applied for them. I had never worked in a mine before. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I was willing.

Good for you.

So I went to an interview with this gentleman, his name was—I can remember his first name, Dwayne. So they hired me to work in the lab. And I thought, “Oh my gosh, what is lab?” So the girl that was there—was working there—showed me how to...They weighed samples of this barite, and taught me the whole thing. So the girl had quit and I had to take over the lab, and it was interesting. I really enjoyed that. And then they needed someone to work in the office and I had never done office work, any type of clerical work. They needed someone to do the payroll and I thought, “Oh my gosh, how am I gonna do this?!” So they gave me the basics and threw it at me and that was it. So I did that and did some of the production books.

What are production books?

Well, the ore that came in, the ore that was delivered, how much waste was carried out. Oh my gosh, for a newcomer it was something. It was mind boggling, but it was very interesting.

I want a lot more details. I'm going to ask you a lot of questions about it now. First, do you remember what year it was that you started with them?

In August of 1974.

Alright, now, what did they pay you and what were the benefits? Do you remember?

I don't remember what my salary was. It was more than I was getting at the drug store. I know that. And I did have hospitalization, group insurance,

Vacation time?

Yes, vacation time. I had that at the drug store, too.

Oh, you did.

Yes, yes I did have that. I'm sorry I didn't mention that. Sick leave, I believe it was, yeah.

Now, how large a company was this barite company? No one has been able to give me much details, so I want as much detail as you can give me. First, where was it located?

Their corporate office was in Houston, Texas.

Where was the mine here?

The mine here was just across from Argenta. They've changed the name several times—I think it's Baker something. I don't know what it is.

How large a mine was it?

They had probably about ten at the time.

Just ten employees?

Ten employees, uh-huh.

And where was the office where you worked?

The office was right here in town where the Frontier Title Office is. That's where our office was. And then Milwhite closed their office here in Battle Mountain and they set one up in Elko, and they asked me to move to Elko with 'em. I didn't want to move to Elko, but I did agree to go with 'em, not leave 'em

stranded like that. I went to Elko and set up their lab there and their office.

Now when you were moving to Elko, were you then atone? Were you divorced and the children away from home?

Yes, I was.

So you were free to move.

Yes, I was.

So now tell me about that phase. How long did you stay in Elko?

I was just there the two weeks, long enough to get their office and their lab set up and I commuted for the two weeks, and then they got someone from Elko to take over the lab.

Does that mean you lost your job?

Yes. But in the meantime, Milchem, which was another barite company, their office manager had been over to my house several times while I was in Elko, looking for me, to offer me a job.

You must have been such a good worker!

Which was very very nice. When he finally caught me at home, I was so excited. They didn't have a office position at the time, but they had work in the lab and in the scale house, which was weighing trucks that would come in loaded with ore and things like this. And so I took it and I progressed from lab and the scales to office work.

Now I want to back up again to your first work with the barite company where you gained this

experience which helped you move on. I want in detail about the lab work, because very few people know about barite. You said there were about ten workers. Did that include miners?

Yes.

How did they mine barite?

I don't know how Milwhite did it. They were out there and they would bring all the samples in. They would crush the ore and everything and bring all the samples in—the dirt samples—for me to weigh. I don't know the specifications now, but the good grade was four point zero.

What did it look like?

It looked like mud. It looked like dirt. Just dirt. To me that's what it was. It was ground up so fine and we had to put 'em in bottles of, there were flasks and there was kerosene in the flasks and we put so many ounces of barite in these flasks and we put 'em in a water bath and they'd have to stay in the water bath about a-half an hour. Then with that temperature and the kerosene and the barite in there, they would all reach these specs. I can't remember, like I said, I remember the highest spec was four point zero, and it couldn't be below—don't really quote me on this, but like, say, a two point ten. So we'd have to test the barite for the grade, and they sold it by the grade for different purposes. Barite was used in glass making. The good stuff was used for medicinal purposes like barite enemas for x-rays and things like this, and then a lot of it—most of it—was used in the oil drilling, in the wells. And I don't know what it's called now, it's been so long since I've been out of that business. But they would put this barite

down the drill holes and then the drills would have a easier time to drill this hard rock.

Where did they sell the barite? Where was the market?

Most of it, I believe, was in Texas. Like I say for Milwhite, I'm really not too familiar with how they did that, But when I worked for Milchem, we sold a lot of it to Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma—wherever there was any major oil drilling.

Now this company moved to Elko and I had read where when China started to ship in barite, it hurt the barite industry here in Nevada. Were you there during that period?

At that time I was working for Milchem.

Did you feel the effects?

Yes, definitely.

What was the reaction of the owners and did they try to do anything about it politically?

Yes, they did.

Tell us about it.

Oh, they had different groups to lobby for them. I don't remember too much about it. I remember—and I think this was for the environmentalists, though, when we had to—kind of were on odds with the BLM, because of their strict regulations against mining. But I do remember that when China was sending all this ore, it just—our business just dropped drastically. They were shipping this ore into Houston from China for a lot less than we could ship it from here so you could see the effect it had on us here.

Do you know whether it also involved low import tax? Did they [U.S.] encourage them to ship it here?

Yes.

And there was no way politically to do anything about it?

No, there sure wasn't.

Was that when they moved to Elko?

No, that was in later years. Like I say, I was workin' for Milchem at that time.

Okay, so this new company, what was the name?

Milchem.

Milchem. They probably knew you were so experienced.

I didn't know the manager at the time. I had no idea who he was.

He'd heard about you.

Yes, he'd heard about me because I had talked to him over the phone while I was working at Milwhite. I needed some help on some things and I called him and he helped me, so then when they needed someone in the lab, and for working the scales, he asked his office manager to come and see me, so that's how I got on at Milchem.

That was still barite?

Yes, that was barite.

Where was that located?

We had our office out here at Hilltop. It was just about twelve miles out of town.

Where the Hilltop Mine was?

Yes, uh-huh. They had a mine out there, and then also mining at Argenta property. Later on Milchem built their office out at Argenta.

Did you have to travel then?

Yes, uh-huh. We carpooled.

How many were working in that company?

Well, at the peak, I think we had a little over five hundred.

Oh, wow.

We had a deposit out at the Getchell and we had a deposit at North Battle Mountain.

You said there were about five hundred. How many worked with you on the kind of work you were doing and tell us a little more about the operation.

Okay, after I was working in the lab and the scales, they called me into the office to work for them and I did the payroll and I was in charge of personnel, with my supervisor, who was Don Babcock and I did that for two or three years. We had a girl doing the clerical work, they had to do the shipping—we shipped barite and we had girls doing accounting and I think there was a total of probably eight or nine office girls.

What year is this by now?

I started in 1974, late 1974, and this is probably like in 1978.

What kind of office equipment was there at that time when you did the payroll? How did you do a payroll for so many people? Did they have more modern office equipment?

At that time, no, everything was done manually.

Oh my!

Yes, and it was a weekly payroll. So the people from Getchell Mine had to bring their time cards into me by Sunday, the people from over here at North Battle Mountain had to bring their cards to me by Sunday. Sometimes they'd hurriedly come in on Monday, and I'd have to have the payroll into Houston by Tuesday afternoon.

How did you do it?

I don't know how I did it. Sometimes I worked late at night.

Oh my, did you have to get the checks ready?

Yes.

Now on what kind of a machine did you do that?

Manually on a typewriter.

On a typewriter! Incredible. Did they increase your pay in your position?

Yes, they did. I was payroll clerk and my pay was increased, I don't remember to what, and then I was appointed office manager.

Good for you. And your benefits—good benefits?

Yes, very good.

That's wonderful. Now you were very busy working. Anything before we leave the barite? 'cause that's so interesting to me. Were there changes during your period there after China brought it in, was it slowing down?

Yes, dramatically. We finally had to close the operations at Getchell and over here at North Battle Mountain and the one at Hilltop closed and we just had the Argenta mine going, and that slowly was winding down. After five hundred employees, we kept laying people off. That was very hard to do—especially, I had employees that I directly supervised, and it was hard to tell them, “This is it.” But it came the time when they had to tell me, “This is it.”

When was that?

This was in 1984.

Oh dear, were they closing?

Just completely phasing out. I think they left the manager and the mine superintendent and a few miners and that was it.

Oh how sad. Now when they had the peak of the industry, five hundred, where did the workers come from?

Mostly the Battle Mountain area. A lot of 'em from Winnemucca, They rented trailers, the housing was almost nothing here and so a lot of trailers were brought in.

And during those years in the seventies did that raise the economy here?

Yes, it did. It really helped the economy.

So when you left there did you retire?

No I didn't. I went on unemployment until I could find something else. I was laid off in August of 1984 and I couldn't find anything that I wanted to do at the time. Finally in 1985, I think it was in May of 1985. I went to work at the hospital. They needed someone to work in the Personnel Department to do payroll, so I worked at the hospital.

Now tell me what the hospital was like when you went to work there and what kind of things were going on in the hospital, in other words, were many people using the hospital or still going other places? Tell us whatever you can.

Mostly people were going other places. It's basically what it is now. They had the older folks here residing...

Like a retirement home or an old age home?

Yes. They had five at that time, and I think that's what they have now. They had the emergency room and that was used mainly for people that were considered emergencies—accidents and things of this sort.

Heart attacks?

Yes, uh-huh. There were thirty-three employees at the time, so I did the personnel payroll for those departments, and worked on some of the insurance: Medicare and the state industrial insurance and some of the other billings. I can't remember what it was now.

Did they have doctors?

Yes. They had two doctors I believe, and then they had visiting doctors that would come in on the weekends. Doctors from Reno.

I understand that the hospital does not deliver babies or do surgery. What was it like when you worked there? Is that the same regulations?

Yes it was.

Why?

They didn't have the equipment, I suppose, or whatever for deliveries.

Is there a reason why?

No, because for so long we didn't have a doctor. And then when we would get a doctor, they would only stay a year, two years something like that. The mothers didn't want to deliver here, so they chose to go to Elko or Winnemucca.

What was the atmosphere like when you worked there?

The hospital itself?

Yeah, the hospital.

I liked most everybody. I get along generally with everybody, but I had never worked around women before and that was hard because it was so much dissention. They didn't say nice things about each other, so it was hard to work in that environment, it really was.

What about the nurses and doctors—not the office staff, but the medical staff?

They were very, very good to us. Very professional. I enjoyed working with them.

How long did you work at the hospital?

I worked from May of 1985 until December of 1985.

A very short time, why?

Yes. Again the gentleman from the state employment office called me and told me that Tenneco Mining Company was coming into the area.

What kind of mine?

Gold. They were coming to the area and needed someone to work in the office. So he gave me the name of the gentleman to call and I called him and he set up a date for the interview. I went into the interview and shortly after that he called me and told me that I was hired.

What year was that?

It was in 1985.

Now where were they located?

Their main office was in Denver, and their office in town was again over here in Battle Mountain above the Battle Mountain Realty office. So I was back up here again. And I worked there from December through June, and then in June we moved out to the McCoy Mine—the present McCoy Mine now.

Where is that?

That's about thirty miles out of town.

Thirty miles?

Uh-huh.

What were your responsibilities and how many people worked for them?

When I first went to work for Tenneco, I did the receptionist work and I did the payroll

and some of the invoices, paying bills, petty cash bills. We had to send everything into Denver—and just gettin' everything ready to send to Denver. Did the typing for the geologist and for the engineers.

No computer yet?

No, no computer yet. And for the mine manager.

Where did the mine manager come from?

He came from Rock Springs, Wyoming.

And did he make his home here?

Yes.

Did he have a family?

Yes. He and his wife had grown children. Our purchasing agent moved here from Tucson, Arizona. He brought his wife after he found a place to live. And we had mining engineers and about three or four geologists.

Did they come and live?

Yes.

So the town was growing?

Yes.

This was in 1984?

In 1985.

And how many employees in the mine?

Well, we just kept growing. When we were still here in Battle Mountain we hired, I think

it was seven employees to work at what we called the process center—one phase of the gold where it's all processed.

Where did they come from?

They were local. They were all employees that I was familiar with and the manager had given me the responsibility to okay the hired because I was from Battle Mountain and they were all new.

They really trusted you.

And I was real glad they trusted me that well.

You said seven in processing, how many were actually working with the mine? That's the chemical process?

Yeah, right. The mine was leased out at that time to a contractor and the name of the contractor was Brown and Root.

Where did they come from?

Their main office, I believe, is in Houston.

A lot of Texas people.

And they had a lot of people working here

From Texas?

I think from their offices, a lot from Texas. but I think their miners were all from this area. So anyway, we finally moved out to the McCoy Mine. That was three miles off of State Route 305, approximately thirty-two miles from town. And our office staff kept growing and growing. I did the payroll until we had grown so large we had different

departments added and the payroll fell under the Accounting Department. They had a second office in Reno and they would issue the checks from there.

The fact that the mine was doing so well?

Yes, uh-huh. And I think presently they have probably about five hundred employees.

SA. Really?! Now is that mine all in the same location?

Yes, uh-huh.

A big mine.

It's a very interesting mine.

Do you still work there?

I've been on disability.

But you're still.

Yes, uh-huh. Anyway, I did the payroll up until 1989, then I was strictly in personnel.

And as they started to grow that big, where did they get all the workers? And how did they?

A lot of 'em from here in Battle Mountain in the areas: Winnemucca, Elko, Carlin.

How did they get them?

Word-of-mouth I believe is what it was. They knew that Echo Bay would be expanding.

Did they change their name to Echo Bay?

Yes, Echo Bay purchased Tenneco.

What year?

That would be 1986.

So its the Echo Bay Gold?

Echo Bay Mine.

Mine, I see.

And then a tot of workers came from Wyoming. Their area was depressed and I don't know how people find out about it, but we have a tot from Wyoming.

Did any of them come and move here?

Oh yeah.

So the city is growing, the economy is better?

Yes.

You said your daughter works there. When did she start?

I think she's been there over five years now.

Does she work in the same location as you? Do you commute together when you work?

No, because her hours are different.

What were your hours?

Seven to two-thirty.

I see. And what does she do there?

She's a buyer for the purchasing department.

What do they buy?

Oh, she buys everything. All equipment that's needed, you know, and just everything. She has a very responsible position. In fact she's on salary, where my position was hourly.

Did you get an increase in your hourly pay?

Oh yes.

Good pay?

Yes, and good benefits.

Did they have a union?

No.

But they'd give you what they would if they were?

Uh-huh.

And so you can go back when you're feeling strong enough?

Yes.

They'll save that job for you. Are they good employers?

Yes, they are.

Considerate of their employees?

Yes.

What do you foresee as the future in that gold mining company? How long do you envision—have you heard them talk about their projections?

Well, when Tenneco first started it was only going to be a five-year project, but as their geologists found more deposits, of course

it grew. For a while there, it was a twenty-year project and that sounded real good. But I think they've cut it back now to fifteen.

That's very good.

Yes, it is.

So they do think that would last that long?

If the price of gold stays up. If it doesn't go down I think below the three hundred, if it goes too far below there, then.

It's three forty-four now.

But anything below that is pretty hard for them to keep going.

Where do they sell the gold?

I can't remember now, it's been so long since I've been out of there.

How long have you been out on sick leave?

Almost three years.

Oh, a long time. When you were there, where were they selling the gold, other countries?

Yes, a lot of other countries. Mainly, I believe, it was here in the United States but I'm not sure anymore. I wasn't involved.

Are there any records or information that's public information that we could add so that we could have copies to show something about the on-going history of a big major gold mine like that?

Oh, I think I could get something for you.

That would be really helpful in the project because that's really the biggest gold mine in the whole country, so it's going to be so important.

I think I can give it to you before you leave. Next time you're here I can have something for you.

That would be so good. Does the company have any of it's own photographs?

Yes. We have aerial photos of the mine.

I could borrow them and take and make copies? That would be really good. I'll look into that. Before we leave this company and your work, is there anything else to add that I might not have asked you? It's such a unique opportunity, since you worked over such a long period. Anything else either about the workers or the effect of the economy? growth?

Right offhand I can't think of anything.

Now I want to get back to your son, Gilbert. Let's follow his life a little bit after he graduated high school.

Yes, after graduation, he went to school in Washington, The City?

What made him choose that?

They asked him to come down and try out for football.

He was an athlete?

Yes, he was. So he played football there and he was far away from home and I guess he was spoiled. He didn't care for Washington. He was there one semester and then he transferred to the University of Nevada.

What was his major in studies?

History, but that didn't pan out. He finally gave up on school and then since he was such a good baseball player, one of the clubs called him to Sun City, Florida to practice with their minor team. So he went to Ft. Lauderdale. and I think it was then he was with the Dodgers, but I'm not sure. He was in Ft. Lauderdale for four months, and he loved it down there, but he broke his ankle and his foot and so they sent him home to recuperate.

Oh! Did he come home to you?

Yeah, and he decided he didn't want to go back. He thought that he had to stay home and take care of his mother.

And mother's taking care of son? [laughs]

So anyway, he went to work for one of the mines, I can't remember which mine. He met this girl from California, he met her here in Battle Mountain.

What was she doing here?

She had come to visit a friend of hers, and they married and out of that marriage they have one daughter. And then that marriage didn't last and they divorced.

Where did the baby stay, and mother?

Cathy went back to California to her folks.

Took the baby?

Yeah.

Oh! Do you get to see the baby?

Oh yes. In fact she's a big girl now. She has three little girls.

Oh, my.

I'm a great-grandmother.

That's incredible! Did your son have part custody of her?

Yes, uh-huh. And then he remarried and had another daughter and she's with her mother now.

Where does she live?

She's living in Fallon right now.

Oh that's close.

Yeah. And she comes and stays with her dad.

How old is she now?

Fifteen and she loves her daddy.

Oh how wonderful. So that's in your house? Does he live with you?

Yes, he lives with me.

And is he still working for the mining company?

He's on construction now.

Oh construction. There's a lot of construction in this state too. So one of the things I find interesting in all the interviews I'm doing is how many of the grown children come back to Battle Mountain—come home.

Yeah, I don't know why. I figure if I was their age, you know, young, I would want to explore something different.

You have an adventurous soul. [laughter] And so your daughter lives here too. So you have your family around you.

Yes. In fact she lives next door to me.

Is she married?

No, she never married.

She's a career woman. She saw brother and Mama and said, "Not for me"?

Yeah. All her schoolmates divorced—married and divorced—and she said, "I don't want to go through that."

Smart woman.

She doesn't like children. She loves her nieces and everything but doesn't want any part of having to rear children.

So she knows herself.

Yes. She doesn't like to cook, so she says, "Why should I get married and cook for some man?"

Does she take vacations?

Oh yes, uh-huh.

She has a good life?

She has a good life, uh-huh.

I want to get back now to your mom and dad. Through all of this, how did their life progress? Your mother was working in people's homes the last time we left her. Your dad—did his work continue?

Yes, he worked on the railroad, and then they had a bad accident on the railroad. Their foreman decided that they had to go out to do their jobs and they knew—at that time it was called “The City of San Francisco”, the streamliner train, was coming through but he thought that they could beat it.

Where was this?

This was right here in Battle Mountain. They left Battle Mountain and he thought he could beat it to the other stop which was just five miles out of town. and they didn't make it. They saw the train comin, they took the car off, started to get the car off the track and my dad was injured.

Did they fire that man?

No they didn't.

They didn't?!

Uh-uh.

Anyone get killed?

No, fortunately. My dad was the most seriously hurt, and he lost the use of his left hand.

Was he on disability?

Uh-huh.

And how old was he?

Let's see, that was in the late forties, and I don't know how old he would have been at that time.

Did they give him a good disability at least to cover it?

Uh-huh. So he was one of these that couldn't just do nothing. He would work for Mrs. Marvel—go clean her yard, just to do somethin'.

So he was able to do things like that. And what about your mom, did she continue doing housework?

Yes, uh-huh. She did for a while and then she went to work at the old hospital. She went to do the laundry over there.

She didn't have to heat the water? [laughs]

No. So she worked there for quite a few years and then she finally retired.

Did your mom and dad get to enjoy at all?

They weren't much for traveling. I guess people in those days, they didn't believe in traveling and spending money foolishly like we do. But they stayed home. They enjoyed life.

Enjoyed the family running around here. What else in your life and their lives can you share that might shed any information? When the freeway [Highway I-80] bypassed town, did that affect the town very much?

I believe it did, yes. I remember when the construction began—of course it brought a lot of people to town, working here. The road construction people had their big crews here and that did affect the economy quite a bit. But I don't know, Battle Mountain has always seemed to carry its weight for some reason or another. It hurts and not severely.

In the late seventies or early eighties. of course there was the battle of getting the county seat here instead of in Austin, and I know that there was a lot of conflict. Do you have anything to share when that was all happening? Was there political lobbying, was there a lot of discord before the vote to change the county seat?

I believe so. Well, of course Austin, it seems like they've never been able to get along well with the Battle Mountain people. And there was a lot of dissention. I have a lot of friends in Austin. I personally didn't feel it, but the town as a whole, and I think when we finally succeeded in getting the county seat here, I think it hurt Austin and I think they were very bitter towards us.

Closed the one bank.

Uh-huh.

Did it change Battle Mountain? Did it bring more people here and more jobs?

No it didn't bring any more people.

Not many moved up from Austin to continue the work?

Uh-uh.

Did it ease things here in Battle Mountain?

Some. Uh-huh.

And so what do you see in the next decade, the future of Same Mountain?

That's hard to see. If this mining continues, I think it will prosper. However, here are so many many mines around here that are all gold mining, and if that does go down, I think it's going to be pretty slow, because there are a lot of people from here work in the mines all around us. You know, like in Valmy, Lonetree, a lot of them that work over in the mines in the Winnemucca area live in Battle Mountain. So it will be hard on everybody.

So you think that the hospital, unless it improves, makes it a place where some might not want to stay and move or doctors whose families are used to better medical care? As people get older, or young families, going to have children,

I don't see people from Battle Mountain utilizing this hospital as they should. We don't have the doctors that specialize in these different things. And most illness seem like they have to send you to a specialist of some sort. The doctor we do have here now is very, very qualified I think. He's special to me, because he has taken such good care of me. I don't see the hospital becoming anything more than it is right now.

You don't see it getting its surgical rooms, or rooms for delivery? Why?

The reason being the doctors. I don't believe that any doctor wants to come to Battle Mountain.

Why?

Elko has a hard time getting doctors. Elko is a much larger community and they have a lot more to offer than we do and I don't think...Why does a doctor from the city want to come to Battle Mountain?

I've been thinking why aren't children of Battle Mountain families who want to come back, why don't some of them think of getting a doctor's degree and practicing, get into the medical field helping their town? Has that ever been discussed, with scholarships for kids?

I believe there's one boy from Battle Mountain but I think the last I heard, he is specializing in something. We don't need specialists. We need a general practitioner. And there aren't too many of those anywhere. I don't see that.

You don't see that.

No, no.

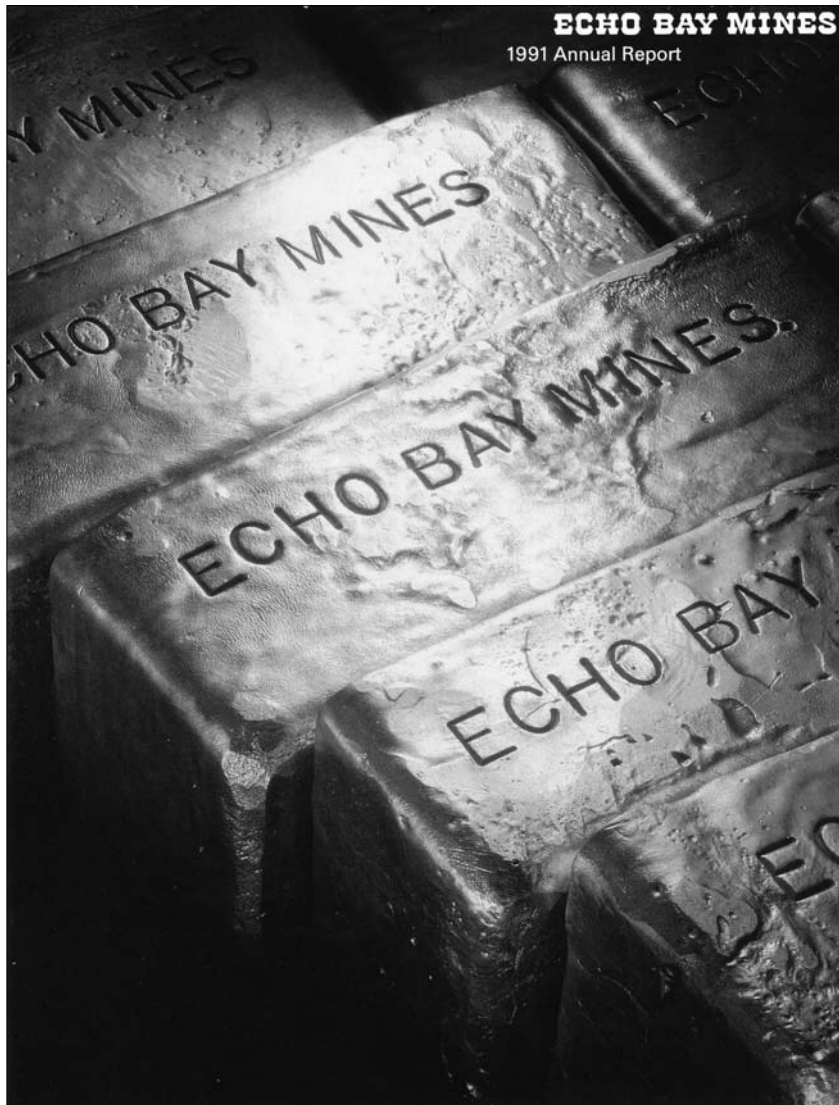
Is there anything else that we haven't covered? because I don't know your entire life. Any other observations or experiences that might add to your interview?

I can't think of anything right now.

What I want to do then is have you keep in touch with me. If you come across visuals or photographs or any documents of some of the mining material, hopefully I'll have a visit there. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for sharing so much new information and your life with us. This is the end of the interview.

Thank you for having me. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

MARY JARAMILLO
PHOTOGRAPHS



Echo Bay Mines - 1991 Annual Report (cover?).
Photo of gold ingots stamped with "Echo Bay Mines."

Battle Mountain Bugle early '78

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"BATTLE MTN. HAS BEEN GOOD TO US"

By Terri Keyser-Cooper

"One of the finest gentlemen I have ever known," said Charles Lemaire of his good friend Jose Ontiveros.

After talking with many people that have known Jose and Sofia Ontiveros over the years, I have come to the conclusion that no one has a bad word to say about the family. Everywhere they are thought of as gentle, honest, considerate and polite.

Sofia was born in Mexico City in 1905. She married young and came to the United States at the age of 19 with her first husband Cosme Sanchez, to work in the beet fields of Idaho. She then moved to Salt Lake City where Sanchez worked as a maintenance man for the cable car railways. She had two children, Julia Sanchez Gomez, and Manuel Sanchez.

Her husband died in 1927.

Sofia married Jose Ontiveros in 1929 and had two more children, Mary Jaramillo and Connie Vigil. She has lived in Battle Mtn. since then.

Joe came to the United States from Lagos de Moreno in Mexico at the age of 20, in 1905. He worked first in the mines of Arizona and went on to California where he was hired by the Western Pacific Railroad. He toured the area, eventually settling in Battle Mountain.

A familiar pattern evolved of working summers for the railroad and winters for the various ranches in the area. He had learned to buckaroo as a young boy in Mexico and it proved valuable experience. He worked for the Savals and the Marvels, as a sheepherder and as a cowboy.

Mrs. Saval remembers Joe as an extremely good worker. "He was especially good with sheep shears." While he worked off and on at the Saval ranch, and that was many years ago, he is remembered as a good man who did his job well.

Tom Marvel's earliest memories of Jose are at the age of four. "I was born in 1924 and as a very small child I remember him at the ranch. He was always around, he was a real cowboy and told me lots of stories, mostly about coming to work for Garrett, the owners of the large cattle ranches at that time."

Marvel remembers him as a very decent and honorable man, the type of employee that is so hard to come by. In Marvel's opinion, the lack of men like Joe Ontiveros is the reason that so many large ranching operations have folded.

Joe was badly injured in 1947 when he was hit by a train. Charles Lemaire remembers, "I knew him the way you know everyone in a small town, but I came to know him well after he was injured." Lemaire was an officer in the Fire Dept. in 1947 and headed the first aid crew. "We loaded him on a pullman through the window, to send him down to the railroad hospital. He was incapacitated for quite some time. When he returned home I visited him often and we became friends."

Lemaire has a high regard for the entire family.

Sofia has been a homemaker for most of her life. She worked as a domestic at the Licking Ranch and for the Marvels, Savals, the Bel Court Motel, and the Overland Cafe when it was run by the Welch family.

Louella North remembers when Sofia worked in the laundry room of the old Battle Mountain Hospital in 1946-48. "She was always dependable, she was quiet but was always"

Article in *Battle Mountain Bugle* (early 1978) titled,
"Battle Mtn. Has Been Good to Us," about Jose and Sofia Ontiveros.

MARY JARAMILLO
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Mary Jaramillo Interview

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PREFACE

Donald Eugene Jung's paternal grandparents were born in Germany and came to the United States in the 1890s. His maternal grandparents came here from Norway. Both families homesteaded in South Dakota where Don's parents married. They later moved to California where Don was born in 1930. Trips with his dad into the Mojave Desert to pan gold sparked Don's lifelong interest in mining.

During his high school years, his parents moved to Northern California. When he graduated, he worked in the logging and lumber industries then entered the South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City. During the Korean War he was drafted. When he got out of the Army in 1954, he joined his dad in a small tungsten mine near Ely, Nevada. The following year he enrolled at the Mackay School of Mines at the University of Nevada, Reno to get his degree in mining engineering. A class project on ore samples from the New

Pass mine motivated him to locate the owners and lease the mine with a friend. At first sight he knew this was the place where he wanted to be.

Don describes in great detail drilling for the quartz ore, the stamp mill, milling procedures and shipment of the gold to the mint. The wife of Don's partner was running the stamp mill and became pregnant. Her sister Kathy came to help her and met Don. They dated and within a few months were married. They were able to purchase the property which included a group of claims, and worked it themselves. When gold prices dropped, Don had to work at other mines, returning to New Pass permanently in 1973. They leased the mine to a Canadian Company and Don worked for them. A skilled carpenter, electrician and mechanic, Don takes care of all the mining equipment. He and Kathy built a large, beautiful home on the highest hill of New Pass where their children and grandchildren enjoy reunions.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Don Jung at his home in Austin, Nevada, July 22, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Jung. It's a pleasure to be here to interview you here this morning for the Lander County Oral History Project. I first want to ask your full name.

Donald Jung: Donald Eugene Jung.

And where were you born?

Compton, California

And what was the date?

January 26, 1930.

Can you tell me about your grandfather on your father's side, his name, where he was born and where he spent most of his life.

My grandfather on my father's side was born in Bamberg, Germany in 1865. His name was Hans Jung, and he married a woman by the name of Frieda Reiche in Germany. They moved to the United States in the 1890s, I believe. They set up a business in Des Moines, Iowa. They were both professional cooks and chefs, and they established a bakery in Des Moines, Iowa.

And tell me the same kind of information about your mother's parents.

My mother's father was named Andris Nils Heggelund. He was born in Norway, December 26, 1882. His wife's name was Ingrid Jacobson, also born in Norway August 19, 1880. They

also moved to the United States somewhere in the 1890s and settled in South Dakota.

Do you know what brought both sets of grandparents to the United States?

No, I really don't. I assume that it was just for the opportunity—more opportunity, I would say.

Now tell me your father's name and where and when he was born.

My father's name is Lothar Jung, and he was born in Des Moines, Iowa, November 7, 1900.

And your mother's name and where and when she was born?

My mother's maiden name was Inga Heggelund, born in Decorah, Iowa, October 29, 1903.

When and where were they married?

They were married in Spearfish, South Dakota. I can't remember the date. But it was on New Year's Eve. I know they were married then on New Year's Eve.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Yes, I have two brothers: Keith Douglas Jung, and Andrew Hugo Jung.

And where are you in that line-up of three brothers?

I'm in the middle.

Right in the middle. We're not going to go into too much of your childhood, since we're concentrating on Lander County, but I would

like to know when you were growing up, what areas of interest did you develop that led you later to your long career in the mining industry?

When I was a kid in Southern California, my dad would sometimes take us out into the Mojave Desert where we would try to pan some gold, and I suppose that's where I first got interested in mining.

When did they go to California, and what brought them there?

They were married in South Dakota, where both their parents had homesteaded and had small ranches in South Dakota. After they got married, they moved to Denver where my dad worked for Gates Rubber Company. And then in 1925 they moved to Compton, California, where my dad worked for a tire company there in Compton.

Did he have the job first, or was he just lured to the West?

I'm really not sure. I think they probably just came out to look for some opportunity in California.

Then I would like to follow a little bit through your high school years. What areas or subjects did you become interested in, and did you do any work during your high school years?

Right after World War II my parents moved up to Mendocino County in Northern California, to the little town of Laytonville, and that's where I went to high school and graduated from high school there. That area is a logging and lumber industry area, and so right after high school I went to work in

the logging woods, as a faller, and also run equipment. After about a year, or year-and-a-half of working in the woods, I decided I wanted to go to college. I still had interest in mining, and having ties with South Dakota, I started my college in 1949 at South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City, South Dakota.

How long did you go to college there?

I went to college there for three years. In the spring of 1952, when I got out of college that year, I called up my draft board, the Korean War was going on, I told them to go ahead and draft me, I wasn't going to go back to college. So they did, and after basic training I went to Pusan, Korea, and spent about sixteen months over there. Upon getting out of the Army in 1954, I came right to Nevada, as my dad had gone in partnerships with a friend of his in Eastern Nevada with a small tungsten mine. And so right after I got out of the Army I came right to the Ely, Nevada area—this was in 1954—and started working in a small tungsten mine in the Snake Range in Eastern Nevada.

Did your family all move to Ely?

No. No, my folks had a small business, a hardware and general merchandise store, in Laytonville. They lived over there until they both passed away. I came to Nevada, as I say, and started mining. I mined at a couple of small tungsten mines until 1956. The price of tungsten went down, so we had to quit that. Then at that time I went to work for Kennicott Copper at Ruth, near Ely, and I worked in a Deep Ruth shaft as a shaft repairman for a period of time.

Was your father an absent partial owner? You said he went into a partnership.

Yes. He was never a miner himself—he had always been interested in it. But he was a partner in this small tungsten mine.

An absent partner?

Right, yes.

A financial partner.

Right.

Now I understand. And then where did you go from there?

I worked at Kennicott Copper in Ely. This was in 1957, I believe. And then it was either that spring or fall, I decided to finish up college, so I came to Reno and enrolled at the Mackay School of Mines at UNR (University of Nevada-Reno).

It must have been exciting to be able to do that.

Yes. I was out of college for about five years, so I was kind of happy to get back into it and get it over with.

And by then it was obvious your main interest was mining?

Right. Yes, I graduated from Mackay School of Mines with a Bachelor of Science in mining engineering.

Did you work during those three years of college, in any mining, during summers or weekends?

Yes, I did. I worked for an exploration company for Union Carbide during the summer, and while I was going to college in South Dakota, I came back to California in

the summertimes and worked in the lagging woods.

So that was a productive, busy time. When you finished your degree at the University of Reno, what did you do then?

In my senior year, I was taking a metallurgy course on the recovery of gold and I asked my professor, Claude Hammond, if he knew of any little small gold mines around the state that a couple of guys might lease and start working, and he told me about the New Pass Mine. And in fact, I'd had an ore sample that I had been working on as a class project that came from New Pass.

Oh, so that sparked your interest.

Right, on this particular mine. So right after I graduated, myself and another fellow, we came over to Austin and contacted one of the owners of part of the claims here at New Pass, and his name was Lee Cooley. We asked him if we could lease his mine—this was in 1958, I believe, the fall of 1958. Yeah.

Now I want to know this: When you first saw Austin—not the mine, but the town of Austin—tell me what it was like, and your observation and your reaction when you saw it.

At that time there was quite a few small mines working around the area. As I recall there was a uranium mine working just south of town. They were doing some work on a tungsten mine over in Smoky Valley. There was several things going on. To me it was just a neat old mining town. [laughs]

Can you remember what the main street [looked like], compared to today, were there more or less stores? was there more bustling activities with miners? with workers who stayed there?

Yes, there was more activity there at that time. The Austin Hotel and Bar was going strong, and a man by the name of Frank Aldape, he had a bar just down the street—I think it was called the Silver Club. That building is still there. The Austin Hotel, it's mostly burnt down. But those places were both going great guns. We used to go in, especially at the Austin Hotel, and they had quite a few dances there then.

At the hotel?

Right.

Did you participate?

Yes! Bert and Millie Acree—Bert played the drums and Millie the piano.

So there was some fun. Then you came up to the mine. What was the young man's name who was coming up with you?

I came up from Reno with a classmate. His name was Dave McCrillis. So we came out to look at the mine. As I first come on the property, I just fell in love with it. Something inside said, "This is the place that you want to be."

Did it look almost like it does now, with the mining equipment that's here now?

Quite a bit, yes, pretty much just the same.

Were there living accommodations? or what did you both do?

There were some old cabins on the property that were useable, and we stayed in those.

How much of this area of the mine was it that you leased?

At that time it was what was called the Thomas W. Mine, and it consisted of seven claims on the north part of the goldbelt Thomas W. vein system. What we leased was the Thomas W. Mine.

I see. First I want to know several things: the kind of mining, and some detail, when you started, of the actual kind of work that you had to do when you first arrived and started with that mining project.

The ore in this mine is narrow quartz veins. The veins run from six inches to four feet wide, and they dipped steeply into the earth. The dip is from seventy to ninety degrees. On the Thomas W. Mine, there was a shaft already in place, and it was down five hundred and forty feet, with a hoist on the surface, and whatever was necessary to run it. The previous owners, who had last worked it in about 1948, they had left some ore on it. There was five levels in the mine, about a hundred feet apart. And anyway, they had left ore on some of these levels. It wasn't quite good enough for them to mine or too thin or something. So we started out right away mining some ore on the 340 level.

To those of us who don't know what that means, describe exactly what you had to do when you said you started immediately.

We took what we call "stopers"—these are drills for drilling vertical holes over your head. So anyway, we took our stopers down. We had to set up an air compressor on the surface, get the air and water lines in shape, and then the first level we worked on was the 340 level, that's three hundred and forty feet below the collar of the shaft. So anyway we went down on the 340 level, and there was some ore left both north and south of the shaft. And we

started to stope south of the shaft about a hundred feet, and that actually consisted of drilling holes in the vein right over our head. The tunnel is about four feet wide and seven feet high. The vein is in the back of it. We started drilling holes right in the vein and loading it with dynamite and shooting the vein down into the track. And then we have to shovel it up into a mine car and tram it to the shaft and dump it into what we call a "skip." And then the skip is a conveyance that hoists, that carries the broken material out of the shaft and dumps it up on the surface, into a truck or another ore car.

Was all of that equipment already there?

Part of it was, but we had to bring in our jackhammers, trucks, compressors—but the headframe was already there, and the hoist was there on the shaft, so that part was set up.

Was it dangerous for your lungs, working that way?

Yes, it is. In quartz ore—the gold in this mine comes in quartz—and particles of silica, when you're drilling holes in the rock, well, you get particles of silica, or dust from the broken ore. We do drill with water, going through the drill. And so that lessens the dust coming out when you're drilling. But then there's dust when you transfer ore through the cars and whatnot. So it is harmful. You can get what they call silicosis, and what that is, is just microscopic particles of dust get in your lungs and they just start tearing it up. Silica is like glass, that's what glass is.

Did you wear masks covering your mouth or nose?

No, we didn't. Once in a while we do, if it's exceptionally dusty.

So now, when you brought up that material, what did you do with it, where did you sell it?

At that time, there was a stamp mill still in useable shape, right below the shaft, about three hundred feet from the shaft. The stamp mill was set up by earlier operators. There was two 5-stamp batteries—in fact, they're still here. Each battery has five stamps in it, with each stamp weighing a thousand pounds. And then the stamps have a six-inch drop, and each stamp drops a hundred times a minute. So when that thing's running, it sounds like a boiler factory, just "bangedy-bangedy-bang." But anyway, the stamp mill was set up and ready to go, so we milled our ore through the stamp mill. A stamp mill is just like a mortar and pestle. You have this thousand pounds of iron falling down, and then there's a steel die under it the same diameter, and the pieces of quartz rock are fed in by a feeder, and they get between the die and the stamp, and the stamp just pounds them up into powder. Then there's screens on the side of the stamp mill that determine how fine the material is before it's discharged from the stamp mill. We use thirty-mesh screens. When we ground to thirty mesh, that would liberate over 90 percent of the gold particles in the ore. And then to capture the gold, every twenty minutes we'd drop in a good-sized drop of mercury into the stamp battery and gold and mercury form amalgam. That's how we caught the gold.

You're very good in describing it. Then what did you do with the gold?

Okay, after we got the amalgam, which is the gold/mercury combination, we put that in a retort.

What's a retort?

A retort is a cast iron, oh, like a pot, with a cast iron lid on it. The one we used was about a quart capacity. But it would hold about fifteen pounds of amalgam—this is your gold-silver mixture. So anyway we put the amalgam in the retort, and out of the lid of the retort there's an iron pipe coming out. It comes out, and then it's cooled. And after we heat the retort to about seven hundred degrees Fahrenheit, the mercury starts vaporizing, and it comes off as a gas, comes out through the pipe, and then we keep the pipe cool, the mercury recondenses, and we have a pot or a pan sifting under the end of the pipe, then we get the mercury back. The mercury comes out as a liquid into the pot and we catch it and use it over again. And then after we're done retorting, which takes about an hour or hour-and-a-half—this "cooking" process—we let the retort cool off, then open it up and there's our gold in there. And the gold at that point is what they call "retort sponge," or "dore." The gold that we ran through the stamp mill, retort sponge would go from about seven hundred fine, or about 70 percent, up to about eight hundred and fifty fine, which is 85 percent. So we'd have from seven hundred to eight hundred fifty fine in gold, about a hundred and twenty, or 12 percent fineness in silver, and then the rest was base metals like copper.

So you both did all of this work yourselves?

Right. We wound up with this product called retort sponge. And then at that time we shipped it to the mint in San Francisco. In those days you had to sell to the mint.

I see. And when you said you sent it, how did you send it?

Well, the previous operator said, "Well, the way to send it is in one of these pound coffee cans. You wrap it all up and put it in there, and then solder the lid shut." Then we took it into the post office and you just send it registered, insured mail.

And then they send you a check?

Right.

What was the price of gold then when you first started?

Thirty-five dollars an ounce.

Was it a financial success, or at least was it worth all the work when you first started? Were you getting enough from it?

We really didn't make all that much. On the first stope we started, on the 340 level, we had mined for several months, and the ore had gotten wider, the vein had gotten wider, gotten to about four feet wide, after we got up fifty or sixty feet up into the stope. Well anyway, we decided to shoot deeper rounds, to try and break more ore per round. We were drilling and shooting four-foot-deep rounds in the vein. Well, we tried some six-foot rounds. When we did that, we had to load more dynamite into the holes to make sure everything broke, and it caused some slabs in the hanging wall of the vein to come loose. These slabs are about a foot thick and maybe five or six feet across. So anyway, we kept on mining, and some of these slabs worked down into the chutes on the level below where we were pulling the ore out. The slabs plugged up the chutes, so we couldn't get the ore out. Well my partners at that time got discouraged and they left.

You said partners.

Yeah, this was the friend from Reno that I went to school with and Lee Cooley from Austin.

Oh, he was in it too.

Yeah, he decided to come out and work with us. And then anyway, they left, and so Kathy and I, we more or less kept on working it just by ourselves. Then just a few months after that, Lee Cooley sold us the unpatented group of claims, what we call the Thomas W. Mine.

Now, we've got to back up a little bit because you said "Kathy," and we didn't get you married!

Oh, okay!

I want you to tell me where you met and how your courtship progressed into marriage and when that was. Start back and tell me that.

She graduated from high school in 1959, from Lincoln County High in Panaca, Nevada. And her sister, Betty, was Lee Cooley's wife. And Lee was the owner of the Thomas W. Mine and one of the partners. So Betty Cooley was pregnant with their son. So Kathy came up from Panaca, right after she graduated from high school, to help Betty here at the mine.

Oh, in other words, Kathy and Betty were sisters.

Right, they're sisters. And at that time, Betty was helping with the hoisting up on the shaft, and she was also running the stamp mill part-time. But then being pregnant, it was getting too much work for her, so Kathy came up to help her. And I'm a bachelor miner here at New Pass [laughter] and anyway she came up in the spring right after graduation and we

started going out, you might say. There's not much places to go here. I think our first date, we drove down the valley about forty miles 'til we hit the old highway, Highway 50, and our first date was at Carroll Summit. This was on the old highway, way south of here about forty miles. We drove all down this dirt road and we went down to Carroll Summit and we had a hamburger and listened to the jukebox in this little road house. [laughs]

Now how long after you first met did you marry?

We got married that September, September 1, 1959.

So she was quite young.

Right, she was eighteen, and I was twenty-nine. [laughs] Her dad didn't approve of that!

When you married, where did you both live here?

Let's see, at first we lived in a small cabin right alongside the stamp mill—a little two-room cabin, with an outhouse, and wood stove. We didn't have much plumbing. There was water plumbed into the cabin, but to get hot water it had to go through a coil on the stove.

Was there electricity?

Just part-time. We had a small generator that we would run about two hours during the night, but mostly it was shut off. And we'd run it, too, when Kathy had to wash, but we'd run it during the day when she had to do laundry with a wringer-type washing machine.

So how long did you live in that little cabin?

Oh, let's see, it must have been about a year. And then we moved to a bigger cabin right up the hill and lived there for several years. I think it was about 1969 when we brought a trailer out here and moved into it.

Oh, you had a trailer here?

Uh-huh.

How soon after you were married did your children start to arrive?

Let's see, Dale was born in November of 1960. And then it was a year-and-a-half later David was born. At this time, when David was born, I was working in Coalinga, California for an exploration company. We were prospecting for asbestos over there.

Was your family with you?

Yes, Kathy and Dale were there. We had shut New Pass down because we just weren't making enough money.

Oh, things slowed down in the mining?

Well, and it was awfully hard to make any money at thirty-five dollar [an ounce] gold. But anyway, I went to work over there for a period of time.

When your first child was born, where were the medical facilities at that time?

Kathy went to a doctor in Fallon. And she went right up to the last day: in fact, the doctor didn't realize it, but she had to have the birth caesarean, and she went right up until... Well, she was overdue, so then anyway the doctor sent her to another doctor in Reno, and Dale was born in Reno.

Was it a hardship not having medical care real close by?

It was, yes, it was. Ninety miles to a doctor. Well, it was farther then. The new highway wasn't in, and so we had to drive from here over into Reese River Valley.

How did you get the job in Coalinga, California?

I got in touch with Jim Bright. I had previously worked for him when he was a geologist for Union Carbide, on a summer project while I was going to college. So anyway, I contacted Jim Bright and he had this job for me over there in California.

When were you able to come back to Nevada and New Pass Mine?

Let's see, also we were up in Alaska briefly around 1960. I worked on a placer gold project near Haines, Alaska. [pause] Let's see, I was with the Exploration Department of Asbestos Corporation Limited in 1961 and 1962. And then in 1963 we came back to New Pass.

Now did you still have the lease on it?

We had bought the property by then, so the property was ours then.

So you came back. When you came back at that time was gold higher? Was it going to be better?

No, it was the same price, but we just, you know, tried to be a little more efficient. But anyway, we mined and milled some more again at New Pass in 1963. Then in 1964 we shut the mine down again and I got a job as mine engineer for Grand Deposit Mining Company at Pioche, Nevada.

Did the whole family move with you each time?

Right.

And what was happening back here when you left? Just quiet?

Right, we just left the place alone. We'd come up on weekends and do a little maintenance work and what not.

Now because we're doing the Lander County history, I want to bring you back here. Tell me when you finally were able to come back here as a family to stay here and work the mine.

We came back permanently in 1973. We spent quite a bit of time here in the intervening years, but in 1973 we came back and started working New Pass full scale again.

What changed it so you could work here full-time again? What was changing?

Well, in the 1970s the gold price started going up again. And then also I leased the property to a Canadian company during that period and I worked for them. We had the mine leased to them, but I was also working for them.

I see, so that way you got a salary?

Yes.

So with a family that made it?

Right.

And where did you live then? When did you start building a house?

We lived in the trailer, right near this house here now, during that period. And then I believe it was about 1980 that we started building our present house.

So tell me when you came back, what kind of changes were there in the Austin area?

Let's see. As I recall, there wasn't too much mining going on at that time in the 1970s.

Had any of the stores closed down? Had any of the hotels closed?

No, as I recall they were all going.

Were the roads better?

Yes, in 1969 they completed this new highway that came closer to New Pass, the new alignment of Highway 50, and so that made it a lot better for us. We were closer to Austin and Fallon both.

Now tell me when you were working for that company as... What were you? Like the manager or the boss?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about what the mining was like then compared to when you first started.

The mining itself was quite similar—there were just more people working.

About how many people working?

Oh, the most were about fifteen.

Did they all live here right at this location?

Some of them did, and some of them lived in Austin.

This Canadian company, were they absentee? or were some of them here working? You said a Canadian company?

Yeah. Some of them would come part-time, but mostly they were absentee.

Mainly they were the finance part?

Uh-huh.

Who were the other workers, where did they get them from?

Some from Austin, you know, local miners. And then some of the miners had been working over on the Fallon area, and they came from there. So just from around the area, you might say.

So tell me now—because that's quite a lot of people compared to the two or three of you who started—what was it like at that time when you were supervising the process?

There was just a lot more going on. We had the mill running at that time. It really wasn't too efficient because there was just too much overhead. We found out later that we could—what do you call it?—do it much more efficiently on a two- to four-man basis, you know, instead of having so many people involved. But anyway, this Canadian company, after we mined for a year or two, they joint ventured with an exploration company, also out of Canada, and we shut the mine down. We quit mining and milling at that time, and they just did exploration work for about, oh, four years.

Now, you say "they." Who's "they"?

It was a company called E & D Explorations out of Vancouver, Canada.

Were you a part of this exploration?

No, they did all of the exploration work. They had their own people here on the property. At that time they were leasing the property from us, but they were looking for a bigger deposit of gold ore.

You mean right here in this area?
Yes.

What were you doing during that time?

I'd work part-time for them, and I also worked at another mill. I worked at a mill over in Smoky Valley at that time, at the Sumitch Mine.

And what kind of mine was that?

It was a gold/silver mine, over by Kingston.

Did you get acquainted with the other Youngs who live in that area?

Well, we knew them from when they first came out here. We were here before they came. They came here sometime in the 1960s, I think, and we knew him since then.

So when you worked out there, did you live here, or did you stay at a camp out in Kingston?

I stayed there part-time. I had a small travel trailer and I would stay out there part-time.

And your family would be here?

Right. And sometimes I'd drive back and forth.

During that period, what kind of changes did you see in this whole region? Was this a new flurry of activity in mining?

Yes, there really was. When the gold price started going up in the 1970s there was an awful lot of interest, especially in Nevada. Because by that time the carbon deposits had been found on the Roberts Mountain thrust system, so there was an awful lot of activity, well, starting in the 1970s, of exploration companies coming to Nevada and either leasing properties or going out and trying to find something and staking it, you know. But there was just an awfully lot of exploration work for gold.

So how long did you work in that Kingston area?

I worked there for approximately a year, a little over a year.

Was it the same kind of mining?

It was an underground mine, yes. The Sumitch Mine was an underground mine. I worked in the mill as the mill foreman.

What does a mill foreman do? Describe what was happening in the mill.

When they first started, I helped construct the mill, put the machinery together and things like that. And then after the mill got to operating, I was the foreman on one of the shifts, you know. That particular type of ore, the gold values are in sulfites, like iron pyrite.

So that type of a mill was a flotation mill. In the mill we made a flotation concentrate, which is a process whereby the sulfide minerals are floated with oils and soaps and whatnot, to the surface of a tank. The sulfide minerals attach to bubbles in the pulp. Anyway, they float to the top, and then the sulfides are scraped off, and that's where the gold is, in those sulfides. So we made a concentrate there, with these sulfide minerals containing the gold. Some of the concentrate we leached right there. The concentrates then went into big vats with a cyanide solution in 'em, and the cyanide would leach the gold out of the sulfites.

Now what did they do with the gold? Did you still have to sell it to the government?

No, at that time gold could be sold on the open market, and so they just would make a deal wherever they could make the best deal.

So where were some of the places they sold the gold? Was it out of the country or in the country?

I think they sold it to one of the major refiners, such as Johnson-Mathey, or Engelhardt. They're major refining companies in the United States, and they buy gold and silver from a lot of these big mines.

Were you on a salary then?

Yes.

Were you doing enough to take care of your family without a struggle by then?

Yes.

So what did you do after that one year with the Kingston Mine?

I came back to New Pass. I worked at New Pass part-time. Also during this we still had the mine leased at this time. When the Canadian company dropped it, then Utah International leased the property.

So they would pay you for using that.

And they would pay us a monthly “rent” you might say, a lease payment.

Did they live on the property?

One of their geologists did, but mostly they brought people in, like a drilling crew.

Bring them on a van or something?

Yeah, and the drilling crew would stay in Austin or whatever. But mostly They stayed in Austin. But they had the property leased until about 1988, I believe it was.

Where else did you work?

I worked at the Austin Gold Venture mill—this has just been about two or three years ago.

And where is that located?

It’s just south of Austin toward Big Crick Creek. And let’s see, it’s about twelve miles south of Austin.

And what did you do there?

I worked as a crusher operator and a loader operator, cat skinner and maintenance around the mill and just general work. Then after that mill shut down, I worked part-time out there on reclamation work.

So you’ve never been out of work.

No.

Because you have talents in so many areas?

Yeah.

Now what’s happening now here at the mine?

Right now I’m doing some work in what we call the Superior Tunnel. This is an area we’ve never mined here yet before. It was last mined in 1948. What I’m trying to do is rehabilitate the tunnel. The ore chute itself is about 1,200 feet back into the tunnel. So I’m putting in air and water lines and widening the tunnel out a little bit in places. I’m trying to get this area ready to mine. I still have about two months of dead work to do.

In other words, you have, through investigation, learned that there are minerals back in there, is that right?

Yes.

Would that be gold and silver?

Yes.

How did you explore it to know there’s something there? How do you do that?

Okay, we have old maps of the whole property and all of the veins. We have what you call assay maps, and this is where previous ones have gone in and taken samples of the vein, and so we know approximately what is back in there. And then also in 1980 or 1982, somewhere along there we sampled that vein ourselves. We sampled the floor of the tunnel underneath the old stopes. That area has

been pretty well worked out above Number 4 Tunnel. Number 4 Tunnel is the last tunnel down the mountainside. So anyway, we are going to mine underneath that tunnel level. And there was already a shaft started in the floor of that tunnel. This was started in 1948, so it goes down twenty feet. And so what we're going to do is just carry this shaft right on down to about a hundred feet. And then we'll mine north and south from that shaft on the vein.

Now who's "we"? Who's working with you now?

Right now, just myself. But I have a friend down in Silver Peak, Nevada. He's trying to raise some financing so that we can just go at it full blast. Right now I'm just doing it part-time, and I'm working part-time.

Where are you working part-time now?

At a silver mine south of Fallon. It's on the Schurz Indian Reservation.

Which Indian reservation?

Schurz [Walker River Indian Reservation]. But anyway, I have a friend over at Middlegate, Nevada, and he bought that mine recently, and I'm over there just helping them out, trying to show them what to do, to get it set up so they can start mining it.

Do you take a trailer with you when you go down there?

No, I stay with some friends in Fallon when I work over there. Because it's about a hundred and twenty miles away.

And you have a son there?

Yes, in Fallon.

You see your family too?

Right.

So do you see that you'll be busy with mining here for quite a while?

Yes. Hopefully, I want to get, oh, say two other men involved in this project here at New Pass. And we do need some financing, and they're trying to get that together right now, and then we'll start production here at New Pass again.

Because the gold is rising.

Yes, it's getting up close to four hundred [\$400 per ounce]. The last I heard it was three ninety-one [\$391] about a week ago.

Now I want to go back to when you started the house. This is a lovely home you have in such a scenic beautiful area. Tell me a little bit about how you were able to have this beautiful home built.

Well, we started it about 1980 and we had two contractors come in and put the shell up. They did all the framing and put the roof on, and then Kathy and I did a lot of the finish work. We did all the plumbing, the wiring, put in the windows, put siding—it took a couple of years of part-time work. [laughs]

And she's talented too, doing that.

Right, she is. She did all of the wallpapering. Myself and a friend did the tile work in the kitchen.

Now when you built that house, most of your children were grown.

Right.

So they didn't live here in this home?

No. Our daughter Julie lived here part-time, but our son was married at that time. Well, maybe just shortly after that he got married.

When your children were young, let's see, there's Dale. David you said died. There's Juliana, and you call her Julie. During the sixties, did they help you? Did Julie help more in the home? or did she also help you with the mine?

More in the home. But the boys helped in the mine.

And James was born in 1980, so he was born and lived right in this home?

Yes.

I see he was born in St. George, Utah?

Right.

How did that happen?

We were living here at the time, but Kathy, she's from Panaca, Nevada, and St. George, Utah is about eighty-five miles away. Julie, our daughter, was born in Cedar City, Utah. But at that time we were living in Panaca. I was working at a mine down there. So anyway, Kathy had a doctor down there in St. George that she liked, so that's why James was born there.

Now, I want you to just tell me more about this wonderful area and the mine. Obviously, it's

your permanent home, a beautiful place. Tell me a little bit about life here. You are a little isolated. Tell me about, for instance, where do you do your marketing for supplies? What happens when you're snowed-in? What are some of the things you want to share with us?

At first, when we first got married, we probably shopped mostly in Austin. Ed and Louise Vigas owned the store there then. Joy Brandt is their daughter. You probably met her.

I interviewed Joyce.

Anyway, we used to buy our dynamite from Ed Vigas, and that was along, well, 1959 and 1960. [laughs] But we did get snowed-in. I remember in 1964 we were out here, and we had nineteen miles of dirt road to get to the old Highway 50 at that time. But in 1964 we had a lot of thunderstorms, and the road washed out about four times that summer, and we couldn't even get across it with the four-wheel drive.

So how did you...

The county would come out and fill-in the wash-outs.

What did they fill-in?

Where the road washed away. And then our older kids went to school in Austin.

How did they get there and how did they get back?

Well, Kathy would drive them in. She did most of the driving. And there was times, you know, when we just couldn't make it in

the wintertime, get too much snow. So we'd get snowed-in and they just didn't go to school. So with James, our last son, Kathy didn't want to go through all that driving again, so we have a little place down in Panaca where she was raised, and she lives down there in the wintertime and puts James to school down there.

No problem with the weather and the roads there?

No, the school's only about a block-and-a-half away. [laughs] And it's in a small town.

Was that hard to adjust to for all of you, the long separation?

Yes, that part is, because at times I'm here alone for considerable periods of time. That part is not so good. This year she's going to try to come up more often. James is getting older now. He stays with Kathy's girlfriend when she comes up here.

Oh, okay, so he can stay there. What kind of social activities as a family has your family been able to enjoy? In other words, do you go camping or fishing?

Yes. Camping and fishing mainly. James and I are trying to go camping next week.

Where do you go when you go camping?

Well, we're going to go down in the Shoshone Range. It's about thirty miles south of us here, across the valley, and go down there.

Do you go fishing in the Kingston area?

Yeah, we've been fishing there, and up at Big Creek, and picnics and things like that. Just this last weekend we had a family reunion. It

was mostly family on my wife's side, the Harris family. But anyway, there was about forty-one people here, and we had a pit fire out in the front here. They cooked in what you call a Dutch oven.

Oh, what fun! Now, I know that you're Mormon, and I have interviewed the Youngs. Are you active in that new Mormon church that was built in Austin?

No, we really haven't been. When we first came here, Kathy and... Well, I was Lutheran when I met Kathy. And then she had been raised a Mormon girl, so anyway I became a Mormon. At that time there wasn't any church here. We had church in the forest ranger's house in Austin. His name was Don Schmidtlein. In fact, his folks used to own the Young's ranch, it was the Schmidtlein Ranch. So that's where we first had church, was there. And then I forget where it went from there. But during that period of time we were active in the church. Sometimes a bunch of the members would come out here. We were living up in a cabin up above the stamp mill and we'd have barbecues and whatever, and cookouts, so we had a lot of fun doing that.

And then got so busy, and it's far.

Later on Kathy and I quit going to church, and we haven't been to church for quite a while, but they're still all our real good friends. [chuckles]

Madge [Bertrand] mentioned something about a lion coming up to your house. Do you want to tell me about that? Do you have much wildlife in this open country?

Yes, there are deer, coyotes, cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits, bobcats and lions, and quite a few wild horses around here.

Mustangs?

Yeah. When the lion come in, this was, I think, two years ago. I was here alone, it was in January, and there was snow on the ground and not much food around for lions, I guess. Anyway, the lion came in in the night and he was after a couple of cats. We have two big cats that stay outside all the time. He came in on the porch downstairs and had ahold of these two cats. He had them in his claws. We had two fairly large dogs down there at that time too. But anyway, the dogs heard the lion get after the cats, and so they attacked the lion. So I heard this awful commotion and I knew something...I thought they were fighting with a coyote, you know. And I was upstairs and I opened the window and I hollered out at him, and the commotion just got worse, so I grabbed a pistol and I ran downstairs. I heard one of the dogs gasp just as I got to the door. I opened the door and I stepped out, and the light cast a shadow in front of the garage door, and the lion was laying right up against the garage door, and he had the dog under him. But I could only see about ten inches of the lion's tail sticking out into the light. So I knew what was going on, of course, as soon as I saw that tail. I shot four times into the woodpile just beyond him. I thought maybe I could scare the lion away. Anyway, the lion just growled. I couldn't see it, so I was in my underwear. [chuckles] I came back in the house and I put on a miner's helmet and a mine light—you know, electric light and a belt and everything. So then I stepped out where I could see the lion. He was about fifteen feet away from me. I shined my light right on him, and he set up at that point, and he had the dog in his mouth. This is about a forty or fifty-pound dog, and the dog was still quivering. I thought maybe it was still alive. But anyway, I shot right between his ears and he dropped

the dog. He started to move away, and then he sat back down and right over that dog. He wasn't going to leave his kill. So I shot him. I was trying to scare him away, but he just wouldn't leave.

And he killed your dog?

Yeah.

What about the cats?

I seen cat hair all over on the porch down there. It was about three days later before the cats come back.

Oh, but they were alive?

They were alive, and they were just petrified. One of them came in the house and he came in the back door of the kitchen here, and he only walked about three or four feet and he looked around the corner, you know, down on his belly. He was looking for that lion, see. And he checked out the rooms in the house. [laughs]

Now was the lion killed?

Yes.

Then how did you get rid of a dead lion and a dead dog?

Well, I called up the game warden, you know. You're not supposed to kill them without a permit, but I told him the circumstances, he just wasn't going to leave. So anyway the game warden came out and they took the lion. And then they skin 'em out and they sell the hides. People buy 'em. But anyway, it was turned over to the game warden, and the dog I just had to bury her.

Have you had any other problems with coyotes or other animals?

No. This past winter there was a lion kill over by our well. Our well is three-quarters of a mile east of us, and I was plowing out the road last January to the well, there was about sixteen inches of snow on the road. Anyway, I got over near the well, and I seen some fur on top of the snow, and I stopped the cat and got off and here was a deer horn stickin' out of the snow. And the lion had killed this young buck, and he'd eaten one hind quarter and part of the side. So that was another lion kill. And then the bobcats and coyotes come in and was feeding on the deer too, of that same kill.

Were the children ever in danger from any of the animals?

No, although I do worry about mountain lions attacking them, because it's happened. So anyway, I worry about it, but all of our kids have walked around these mountains by themselves—even years ago, Julie was a teenager, a young boy, I think he was ten or twelve, came out deer hunting with his father. They were camped about three miles north of us at a place called Gilbert Creek. Well the boy wandered off and got lost. And so the word went out and they brought searchers out from Fallon and a whole bunch come out from Austin. And my daughter Julie, though, that night, she just took off from here and went hiking in the pitch black, all by herself. Julie was walking up this old dirt road going over into Bull Canyon, and here a deputy sheriff comes up in a jeep, you know, and sees Julie in the road, "What are you doing out here?" "Well, I'm looking for that boy!" And here Julie's just a little teenager, but she had no fear a'tall about the mountains, and she just walks around. [laughs]

Now when your children....Let's take Dale first. Did he go through high school here in Austin?

Yes, he graduated from high school here.

And where did he go then? Did he stay here to work with you?

He started college in Reno, but he only went one semester. He did real good grade-wise, but he just didn't like it, so he came back and worked with me here at New Pass,

And then when did he leave here? He's the one who lives in Fallon?

Yes. Oh, let's see, I don't really remember. He worked for a gold mine out in Smoky Valley for several years. You know, after things kind of shut down here, he worked out there. And then he met his wife, Kim. She was from Montana, and she was a teacher in Austin. And so he met her in Austin and later on they got married.

Did they live in Austin?

Yes, they did. At that time they were living in Austin and he was working at the Cypress Mine in Northumberland, the other side of Smoky Valley. And she was teaching in Austin.

Did they have children?

Yes, it was a year or two after that before they had any kids, but anyway they have four children now.

And then they all moved to Fallon?

Yes.

And what did you say he did in Fallon?

He works for Nevada Cement in Fernley.

Oh, in Fernley!

Yes, they live in Fallon, but he works in Fernley.

And Juliana, did she also go through high school in Austin?

Yes.

Did she stay here a while?

She moved to Reno after high school. She went to community college there. She was studying art, and oh, I forget what-all, different things. But she lived there for a while. Then she got married for the first time. She divorced from her first husband, then remarried.

Where did she meet him, in Reno?

No, he lives on a ranch down here at Alpine, just west of here, and his name was Mike Mavity.

Did she live there on the ranch with him?

Yes, for a period of time.

Did they have children?

Yes, they have one son. The son, Clancey is his name, and he's living with Julie and her husband now, down in Las Vegas.

When did she remarry?

It's been about a year-and-a-half ago, I think. She married a man by the name of Chuck Younglove, and he was a coach at

Panaca, and that's where Julie met him. He was a football coach there. So anyway, Julie met Chuck down there. She was working for the park service at that time, at Cathedral Gorge. She was an assistant park ranger. Anyway, she met Chuck down there. She had been divorced for a couple of years by this time. So they got married. And now they have a baby.

Oh now nice. And what does her husband do in Las Vegas?

He's a teacher and a coach.

So you're close enough in the same state to see all your children.

Yes.

Did they all come to the reunion?

Yes.

And then we know about James going to school there. Now I want you just to fill in with some of the things that I haven't asked you about your mining life and just your family life here in general that I don't know to ask you.

Well, when I first started mining over at this little tungsten mine—this was over by Osceola, Nevada, which is about forty miles east of Ely on Highway 50. Anyway, I worked with this partner in a small tungsten mine. That was the first mining I'd ever actually done. The name of that mine was the Dirty Shirt Mine. It had a little shaft on it and a vein system. Anyway, there was some fairly high-grade tungsten in there. My first mining was with a machine called a "column bar and arm." And then the jackhammer set in what we call a shell. Miners would understand this,

but non-miners probably wouldn't. But it was really a complicated way of drilling holes in the ground. You had to put this big steel pipe between the roof and the floor and wedge it in, and then it had a bar sticking out on it horizontally, and then a shell went on that bar, and your jackhammer set in that shell. And in this shell there was a screw feed, and you had a little hand crank, and when you'd start the jackhammer up, then you'd turn this little hand crank and feed the drill steel into the rock. You know, it would feed in about two feet, and then you had to crank it back and put in a longer steel if you wanted to drill a four-foot round or a six-foot round.

I hope we can find a picture of that. If you ever find one, let me know,

I never took any pictures over there, but I do still have the column bars and arms like we used to use.

Oh, maybe I can get a picture of that.

Yeah. And we used carbide lights. We didn't have any electric cap lamps at that time. So that was a hassle with the carbide lights. We'd hand muck. We'd shovel into a wheelbarrow or small car and then tram the muck out to the shaft and dump it into a skip and then my partner would be up on the surface and he'd hoist it out, see.

All hand labor.

Right, a lot of hand labor—an awful lot. And then I worked in another tungsten mine a year or so later, and at this one we started using machines called “jacklegs.” In this, the jackhammer is supported and pushed into the rock by an air cylinder. Instead of using this

column bar and arm, which takes a lot of time to set up and move the arm up and down on this column and all of that to get your different drill holes in. Well anyway, they invented what we call jacklegs, around in the early 1960s. So we got ahold of one of those, and that made drilling a real lot easier. You still had to hold the machine, see, but you didn't have to set up all this other stuff to drill your holes in the rock.

There must be mining books that have pictures of this equipment.

Yes.

I'll see if we can find some to add.

Yeah, right.

What do you use now?

We use jacklegs. In larger mines, larger underground mines, they use machines called “jumbos.” And the drills are mounted on slides that are hydraulically positioned, and there's a hydraulic motor that pushes the drill steel into the rock, you know. In the small mines, we can't afford that kind of equipment, so we still use jacklegs, which are hand-held machines, but the air cylinder on the leg itself does most of the work for you.

When you take us around your mine after and show me, I'll get some photographs of the current equipment.

Right, I'll show you a jackleg.

Uh-huh, and other things. Tell me what you foresee in this area in mining in the next decade. Do you think it's going to continue and grow? What do you see in your future?

For the small miners, it's pretty bleak right now. They've just instituted some new laws and made it very difficult for small miners to even stake claims any more. And they're puffing more and more costs on them, you know. And the environmental contro that's all fine and everything, but the permitting process has gone up several thousand percent—I mean, in the amount of things that we have to do.

Describe a couple of things to me: Describe the changes now in filing a claim; and some of these things you're saying have changed, so that we can understand.

Okay, up until the last couple of years, to file a claim, anybody can file a claim.

Describe what filing a claim is, and claiming a site is.

Any citizen of the United States can file a claim. And what it consists of, is you go out and prospect and try to find a mineral deposit, or where you think there's a good likelihood that there would be one.

Now this would be public lands that no one owns?

Right, yes, and there's no previous claims on them.

Now, where do you find out where that is?

In the records in the county courthouse, or the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) Office in Reno. And they have maps, you know, showing all the public lands, and where present claims are and whatnot. But if you find an area where you think there might be a gold, silver, lead, copper, whatever—any kind

of metal deposit—then you can stake a claim on it.

And how do you stake a claim?

You put up what is called a "location monument," and that has to be like a four-by-four-inch post, four feet high.

Just one?

Yes. Well, that's to start with. That's the location monument. And then you put the location notice on that monument, describing that this is the center of the claim, and the claim extends seven hundred and fifty feet north, seven hundred and fifty feet south, three hundred feet west, and three hundred feet east.

Is that the amount that you re allowed to claim?

Right.

Is there a form that you fill out?

Yes. And one claim is an area that's 600 feet wide by 1,500 feet long. It's approximately twenty acres.

Wow, that's a lot!

Yeah. And then after you've put that location up, then you have to go to the county courthouse to file it, to make it legal. And you pay a location fee. And then you have to come back and monument all the corners of that claim. You put a post in each corner and you state on the post that this is the northwest corner of the New Pass Number 1 claim, and the northeast corner, or southwest, whatever. And you have to monument the claim within sixty days. So that's essentially what it is. And

then the law, prior to this year, you had to work that claim, do exploration work or some type of work on it, worth at least a hundred dollars per year, to hold that claim. They've just changed the law this year. Now you have to pay the government a hundred dollars to hold onto that claim, instead of spending the hundred dollars and puffing it into the claim and developing it, now you have to pay the government "rent" on it, you might say.

Is it just for mining? It's not for building a home, like homesteading or anything?

No.

Only to encourage mining?

Uh-huh. And that's why they have these mining laws, you know—it was to encourage people to go out and find minerals and start a mine. But right now, as far as small mine operators, they're really discouraged. They're not going to go out prospecting any more.

But aren't some of the small prospectors who really aren't serious miners selling their claims to big companies?

Oh yes, they have. There's been a lot of claims sold, you know, to the major companies, that were found by small prospectors, or small miners.

When they sell these claims, do they get the money from these big companies?

Yes.

And none of that goes back to the government that owns those lands?

No. No, when you stake the claim, under the previous law, then you had right to the minerals.

Oh, just the minerals, but you didn't own all that land?

Not the land.

Okay, you didn't own all that land, just the mineral rights.

Yeah, just the mineral rights.

Then what happens to that land?

Like some of these claims here, they were started in 1864 is when this was discovered. Well, they proved up that there was a mine here—they produced ore and whatnot. Well, they had what they called a "patent law," and it's still in effect, although they're trying to change it again now. But if you proved that you had a mine and it was actually producing ore and whatnot, you could get the claim patented. And that's what happened here at New Pass: we have patented claims here now, about a hundred acres of patented claims. And then when it's patented, then it's fee land, you own the land.

Then you own the land?

Right. It's quite a process. It takes a lot of time and money to get them patented. It has to be surveyed by a licensed mineral surveyor and everything. You have to prove up that in fact there is mineral there and all of that. You can't just patent any land.

Sure, that's understandable.

It has to be a producing mine.

But some of this land, you bought from someone?

Yes.

Because you didn't have the first claim, right?

No.

So you had to buy that?

Right. We bought the unpatented claims from a man, and the patented group belonged to some people down in Los Angeles. And we bought the patented group of claims from them.

Were there a lot of prospectors who were out of the state who did prospecting for other reasons than you might be? In other words, coming from, let's say L.A. or somewhere else?

Uh-huh.

How does that affect the state for the Nevadans when that happens?

During the "exploration boom," you might call it, of the 1960s when so much interest was generated in gold, a lot of revenue was brought into the state, and then a lot of the people got jobs doing this exploration work. And quite a few mines opened up—in fact, they're still going. I mean, I'm talking about large mines, such as Smoky Valley at Round Mountain, and Newmont and American Barrick and those large companies up in Elko and Eureka Counties.

Yeah, and there's some up in Battle Mountain.

Right, in Battle Mountain. But that really took off, see in the late 1970s and 1980s when

gold prices started going up. A lot of capital come in from Canada and Germany and all over the world: Japan and Australia and America too. A lot of capital came into the United States, and especially Nevada. Nevada was a hot gold state.

The most, I understand.

Right, there's the biggest gold reserves in the United States are in Nevada.

How do you think the economy of Nevada is, compared to the very difficult economy in states like California? Nevada always seems to have some work.

Right, Nevada's been real good. Like I said, for the small mine operator it's getting tougher and tougher, but the big mines they have lots of reserves. Unless something drastic changes, you know, to the price or some kind of government regulations, well, they'll operate for many years.

And if yours is slow, it seems like you can always work for these companies, with all of your expertise and background.

Yeah, if I can't make it here [laughs] I go to work somewhere else!

You don't really have a worry about your future?

Well, not too much. Things are rough at times, and they're good at times—it's up and down. Mining is probably like a small farmer—it's just up and down. I've mined tungsten, mercury, lead, zinc, silver, gold. And tungsten mining, we had to just quit it, after we'd spent some money on it, because the price went down. So you're really...

You're at the mercy of the market.

Right, you really are. And it's very risky, financially, mining is. A Lot of people think it's easy—you just go out and pick up gold, but no way. It's very risky financially. In the 1970s, the oil companies just had money coming out their ears, you know. They just had a lot of excess capital, the big major oil companies. And quite a few of them started buying up mining companies. They soon got out of it, when they found out how risky it was financially. I mean, they bought big mines like Kennicott Copper and Anaconda and some of these large properties, and Exxon, I think, got involved in a molybdenum mine over by Eureka, Nevada, and it was going to be a big multi-million dollar project. But you know, they soon started sellin' 'em off because they found out how risky, financially, that mining really is. It's not as cut and dried as oil production.

Now, living in this kind of isolated area, where do you and your wife and your family—where do you go for banking? I was just kind of alarmed, there's no bank, now that the county seat moved, in Austin. What do people do if you need cash right away? Everyone doesn't take a credit card. I wonder about it. Tell me, how do you handle all that?

We're out here most of the time. We bank in Fallon. If we do need cash in Austin, we can cash a check in there.

Where?

Oh, Joe Dory's Chevron station, or the Owl Club—it's a bar in there.

Do they keep enough cash?

Yeah, although there's not a lot. Joe Dory normally keeps a fair amount.

Does he have to know you? What do you do...

Yeah, he keeps cash for locals. But we bank in Fallon, as I said. So if we think we're going to need cash, we try to just arrange to get it while we're in there.

About how often do you both go into Fallon? I know you work there sometimes, but let's say on your own, to shop and get money and bank, maybe have a meal out?

Maybe once every two weeks.

When you go, do you eat in a restaurant and have a little change of pace?

Right, yes. But I don't get in there too often. Now Kathy's going to go in—her and James—in the next few days.

They go in to shop for clothes?

Yeah, but I'll just stay out here.

Do they go and see your son and family?

Right.

Shop? Bring back a lot of...

Yeah, bring back plenty of food for the next week or two.

Do you have much time for recreation?

I don't myself. I'm pretty much involved here. Just keeping things maintained is quite a chore in itself. We generate our power with

a diesel engine, so I have to take care of that. I'm the mechanic that takes care of all the equipment. You know, I rebuild the jacklegs, and if the loader needs any work on it, or a cat or whatever, I do all that type of stuff.

Oh my!

And I do the welding and stuff. [laughs] I'm the electrician and the carpenter. [laughs]

It's lucky you're so talented in so many areas. Now you said the well is way back there. Did you have to dig the well, or was it here when you came?

No, it was here when we came, yes.

Is that where all your water comes from?

Right.

From the well?

Yes, we have a good well.

Now, your electricity: does that come in from Austin?

No, we have a generator here.

Was that here?

Well, the one that's here right now, we purchased it.

Does that run your refrigerator and washer and all that?

Right.

And where does that come from?

The generator is over in a tunnel about three or four hundred feet west of us, from where the house is. I have it set up in a tunnel, and then I have power lines going to the trailer where we used to live and power line over here, and then a power line down to the shop.

Is the trailer if you have a worker here, or company or something?

Right, it's liveable, so we keep it for somebody else.

Before we end the interview, is there anything else on the Lander County part that you think might be important for people to know that you can share with us?

The only thing is, this mine was discovered by prospectors or miners from Austin.

Oh, tell us about that.

The story, as I understand it, they were coming out this way, and they were on Mount Airy. I think at that time, Mount Airy, there was a stagecoach road that came through the country. They called it the Old Lincoln Highway. And there was a stop on top of Mount Airy where there's a spring. But anyway, as I understand, a couple of prospectors from Austin met some Indians there on Mount Airy...

Do you know about when that was?

This was in 1864. And these Indians told them that there was gold on this mountain, and they pointed over to the west, which was New Pass Mountain. So they came on over and found quartz laying on the surface, and they mortared it up and panned it and they

saw gold in the rock in their pan, so they located some claims and started working.

Now, do you know who that was?

Thomas W. Byers.

Tell me a little more, I understand the Cooley family was in this area a long time.

Right, yes.

Where were they located?

Jack Cooley worked out here for the mining company that had it, probably—he might have been here just prior to World War II and then right after World War II. And they lived in a cabin here on the property. And then when the Silver King Divide Mining Company shut down, I think in 1948.

Silver King Divide?

Right, it's called Silver King Divide from Tonopah. They shut down around 1948. And it was shortly after the time that Lee Cooley—this was Jack Cooley's son—and Lee Cooley is the one I worked with at first here. Well Lee Cooley bought the Thomas W. group of claims from Wayne Smith, and he was the owner of the claims at that time. Wayne Smith had been involved in this for quite a long time, prior to World War II and after World War II.

Was he here on the premises?

I never met him. He had died before I came here. But Lee bought the claims from Wayne Smith, and then myself and Dave from Reno, we leased and worked with Lee starting in 1958-1959. And then myself and my dad

bought the Thomas W. group of claims from Lee Cooley, after he left.

Was that Edna's son?

Yes. Yes, you've met Edna.

Yes, she won't let me interview her. [chuckles]

Oh yeah?

So she lived out here and that was her son?

She lived out here too.

And they all were doing mining here?

Right. I think it was in 1952 that Jack Cooley, the father, Edna's husband, and Lee and Larry, his two sons, they were all out here. And they mined some around 1952, and then they shut it down. And then it was 1958 when I came along, me and my partner. We mined it again. And then, like I say, me and my dad bought the Thomas W. group of claims from Lee Cooley.

Did your mother and father ever come here and visit you?

Yes, my dad would come over fairly often. He had a business. My mom and dad had a business in Mendocino County.

What kind of business?

They had a general store. They also had a motel right next to the store. They had bought this in 1945, right after the war, and moved up there. But anyway, my dad would come over here part-time and help us—especially when Kathy and I were here alone, he would run the hoist.

He knew how to do all that?

Yeah. He had never been a miner, but he was always interested in it and liked it.

Did your mother ever come?

Yes, but she pretty much stayed in California all the time.

Was it because she was too busy, or she didn't like to travel, or what?

She was pretty busy. Yeah, because they both ran the store over there. They both worked at it.

So you didn't see them too much, you were both so busy.

No. We'd go over there sometimes for a visit, you know.

Is there anything else that we haven't covered, especially Lander County, before we close the interview?

[pauses to think]

Or if you think of something after, I can always add it.

Yes. I really can't think of anything right now, you know. I know there's a million things, but. . .

Well, you've given excellent detail, because you're very good at describing the equipment and the process, so this is going to be very helpful to many people.

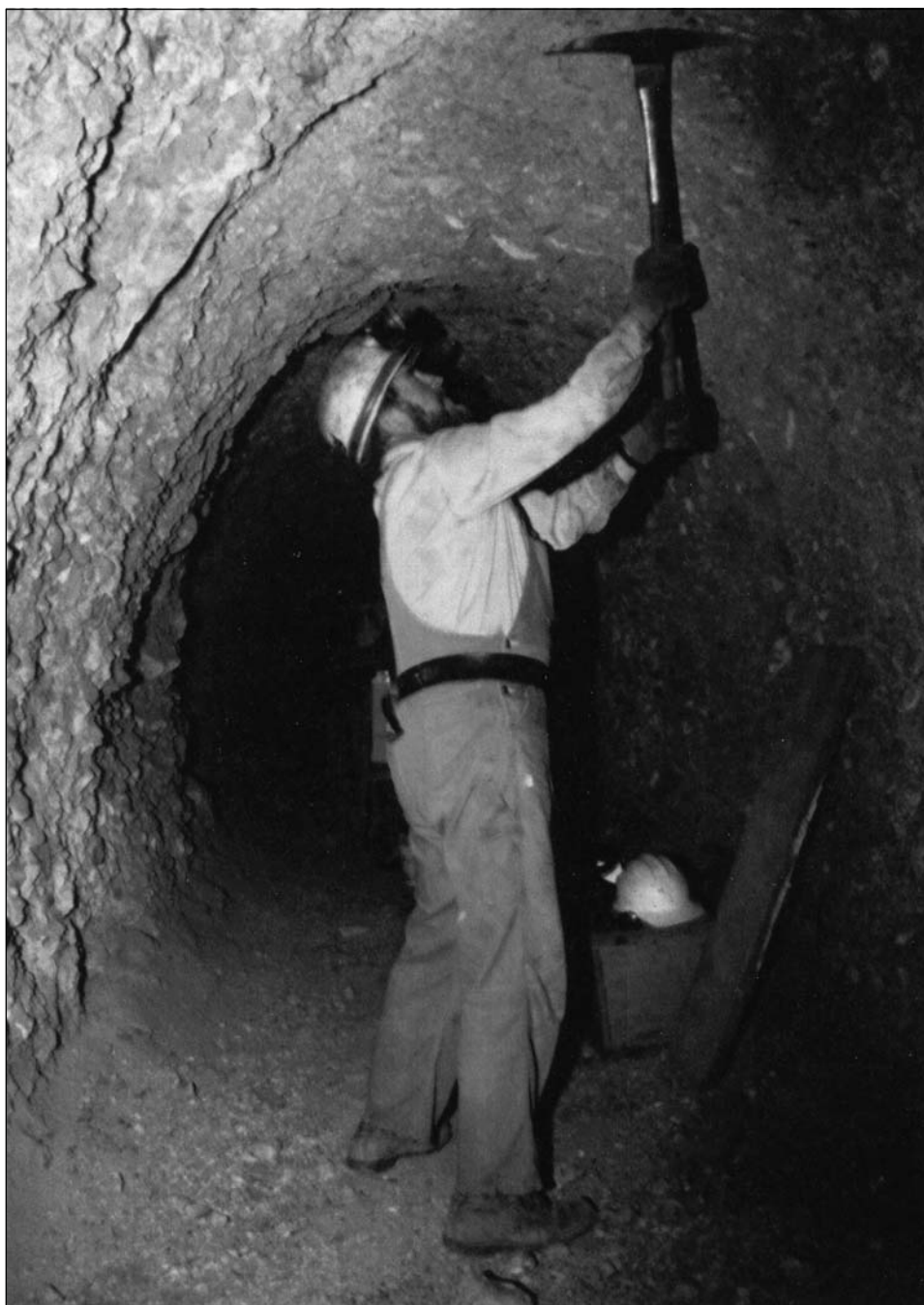
Well that's good! I hope that those that aren't familiar with mining and milling will understand something more about it.

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for sharing your experiences and your life with us. This is the end of the interview.

Thank you.

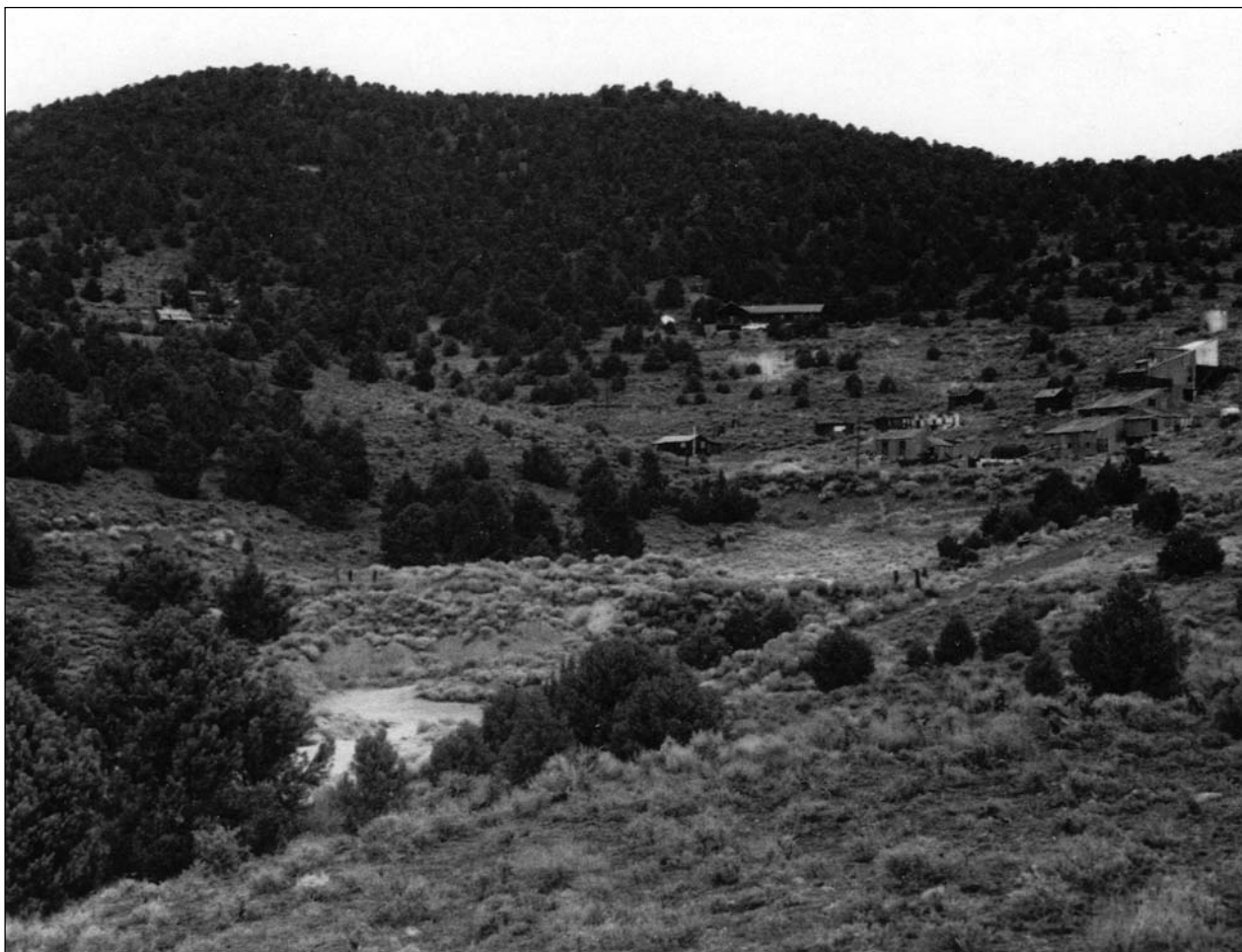
DONALD JUNG PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



Don Jung, New Pass gold mine.

(Original photograph owned by Jung)



New Pass Gold Mine

(Original photograph owned by Jung)

DONALD JUNG

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Donald Jung Interview

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MOLLY FLAGG KNUDTSEN**PREFACE**

Molly Flagg Knudtsen agreed to an interview concentrating on her activities and involvement with the University of Nevada, Reno. She did not want to include her life at Grass Valley Ranch. Therefore, this is a limited interview. Born in New York City in 1915, Molly Flagg Knudtsen married Dick Magee in 1942 and made her home at Grass Valley, Nevada ever since. After twenty years, and concerned about the inequality of education in the rural areas, Molly decided to run for the UNR Board of Regents. She was the first woman to be elected to the board and became more and more involved with the university. Interested in archeology, she spearheaded the founding of the Department of Anthropology at UNR, which now provides advanced degrees. After surveying eighty sites of pottery and publishing her archeological work, the university gave her an honorary Doctorate in Anthropology.

Molly's "real love" is the College of Agriculture, which named a building after

her. Graduate students now come from all over the world to the Ph.D. program in agriculture. Mother area of her interest is the Desert Research Institute, a research-oriented institution working in atmospheric physics and water use. She also served on the grazing board of the Bureau of Land Management.

Molly tells of two restoration projects she accomplished in Austin: the Stokes Castle and St. George's Episcopal Church. A cousin of the Stokes, she heard about Stokes Castle long before coming to Austin. Learning that it was going to be sold and dismantled, Molly purchased the Castle to save it for Austin. She also had a leadership role in the repair and restoration of St. George's Episcopal Church and the beautiful Steuben glass cross on the altar.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Molly Flagg

Knudtsen at her home at 1273 Creek Haven Circle, Reno, Nevada. The date is September 12, 1993.

Good morning, Molly. I'm just delighted that you're allowing me to come to your home in Reno to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you first tell us your complete name?

Molly Flagg Knudtsen: My name is Molly Flagg Knudtsen.

And where were you born?

New York City.

When?

In 1915, September 13.

It's close to your birthday! I want to bring you quickly to Lander County, but I want to know from you, some of your interests growing up that led you to become so interested in the West—whatever you care to tell us.

I wasn't specifically interested in the West until I got here. I married Dick Magee in 1942 and made my home at Grass Valley ever since.

Where did you meet him?

I met him here in Nevada, but I knew about him before that. He went to Princeton, which was quite near Far Hills, New Jersey, where I lived.

We're going to start with your involvement with the university, and will you tell us when that was, and how you became connected to your important positions there?

I had lived at the Grass Valley Ranch for almost twenty years when I finally decided that I was obligated, in a way, to repay some of the wonderful things that Nevada had done for me, and I was very much concerned about the inequality of the education that was being received by the children that were going to school in the rural areas as opposed to the children that were going to school in Reno or Las Vegas or any of the larger cities, and I debated whether I should perhaps run for the school board and I knew quite a few people who were members of the board of regents, and I decided that the best way that I could influence equality of education in the state—particularly in the rural areas—was by running for the board of regents. I didn't realize that in those days, no woman had been elected to the board of regents—regents are elected in this state, some of the states they're appointed. There had been women on the board of regents who had been appointed to fill out their husbands' terms if their husbands had died, or for some other reason they had been appointed, but nobody had run for election until I came along. And one of my dear friends were the Newton Crumleys. Newt Crumley was at that time, serving on the board of regents so I trotted over to their house—they were living in Reno—and asked Newt what he thought about my running for the board of regents, and a look of perfect horror came over his face and he said, "We can't have a woman on the board of regents!" Well that of course intrigued me. I said, "What are you boys doing?" [laughter] And at that point, we only had eight hundred women students but still they were not represented by a woman, and so I decided that I would run. But because I had been educated in other parts of the world and my family had a tradition of going to Harvard and Princeton and those

kind of schools, I was not very familiar with how a state-supported institution of higher learning operated. But that really didn't bother me very much, and so I decided to run and it didn't really matter to the people in the state that I didn't know much about the university. They were particularly intrigued by the fact that I was a member of the Magee family which had—my mother-in-law was the first recorded white birth in Eureka County. They had been here for generations and the name was very well known. In those days I was Molly Magee. I dreamed up a slogan "Molly Magee for District Three" and people still remember it. [laughs]

That's wonderful! I have two questions before we go further. What year was this? and do you know what the population of the university—you said eight hundred women—do you know what the total population was then, about?

I forget completely, but it was not very big. The only campus that we had was in Reno and the regents ran in the district that they represented, but my district was fifteen counties—the fifteen rural counties. The only way that you could reach anybody in those counties was by advertising out on the radio out of Clark County or out of Washoe County, so to all intents and purposes I was running statewide. And this was very good because all of the members of the board of regents in those days felt an obligation to the entire state. They were just as much interested in what went on in Lander County as I was interested in what was going on statewide. So I ran on the slogan of "Molly Magee for District Three" which didn't mean anything and any time that I was asked to speak, I would simply get up and say, "I really think there should be a woman on the board of regents," and then I

would bat my eyes and sit down. And it was a good short speech and people loved it. Also, I took a horse with me. I went to all the county fairs and my biggest expense of running for the board of regents was in buying a horse trailer. [laughter] I used to load a horse up in the horse trailer and I used to ride the colors in the rodeos and it was a great success. It really was. So anyhow, I was elected.

What year was that, that you were elected?

In 1960.

So it seems a lot of men voted for you too then.

Well everybody voted for me. I had the biggest vote of anybody that ran in the state! It was absolutely fantastic! [laughter]

That's really historical. Do you have any of the official document records that could be copied or something to add to the interview on that election or is it available at the state archives?

Well it made the headlines in the Reese River Reveille, if you want to look at that. [laughter] They were so excited having somebody from Lander County on the board of regents and Mr. Thatcher was the editor in those days and he was a wonderful gentleman.

What was his name?

Thatcher, William Thatcher. He was in his nineties in those days, and a very unusual and interesting man. But it hadn't dawned on me that I was then going to have to confront eight outraced gentlemen. And it was just exactly like walking into a lions' den. I'll never forget my first appearance at the board of regents, I was so nervous I couldn't seem to get myself

organized to get there, so I was a little late and everybody was sitting there, and all of them, with the exception of Dr. Anderson, were smoking cigars.

Oh, no!

The room was really a smoke-filled room if I ever saw one and through these clouds of smoke I saw all these enraged gentlemen, and I was instantly terrified. [laughter] But I realized I didn't know anything and I made it a point to study regents and what their responsibilities were. I went to the president of the university, Charlie Armstrong, and asked him what I should know and could he help me in any way. And also I was very careful not to say anything until I knew what I was talking about. So it was a whole year before I did anything.

Now, you were quite a young woman in those days. How did your life change? What were the time elements and activities that you had to quickly get involved with and you lived quite a distance from Grass Valley. How did you handle all that?

Well, I rented a little house in Westfield Village. And I inhabited that house for thirty years. I loved it! It was just a nice little house. I always did come into Reno about once a month to do various things because there really weren't many resources in Austin, much as I love it, and when I was campaigning my husband—my late husband, Dick Magee, was not very enthusiastic about my running for the board of regents and we had a plane, but he wasn't about to fly me around to campaign, so Joe Dory and Ruth, his wife, used to fly me, and one time when I was flying, Joe Dory mentioned to me that Stokes Castle, which in those days belonged to Fred Volmer, was

going to be sold, that Fred needed the money and that he was selling it to some interest in Las Vegas and they were going to dismantle it and rebuild it on the Strip. This absolutely horrified me because I had heard about Stokes Castle long before I ever came to Austin. Well, it belonged to the Stokeses who were cousins of mine and Olivia Stokes and I had gone to the same boarding school and my mother was very, very fond of Harold Stokes and Graham Felt Stokes took a great interest in me and the fact that I had moved to Austin, and used to talk about the castle all the time. So I asked Joe, who knew Fred Volmer quite well, what he wanted for it. And so the next time we were flying somewhere Joe told me what the price was and it wasn't too much and eighty acres went with the castle and there was a gold mine that ran under the castle. And so I scraped together the money that Mr. Volmer wanted and bought it and I didn't buy it with any idea of doing anything much with it, I just wanted to save it for Austin. It seemed to me that it was wonderful landmark and all of the early-day inhabitants of Austin had worked on it. John Wholey, whose son I knew, had been the master stonemason and he was a wonderful stonemason. And in those days, we had founded a Chamber of Commerce in Austin and I had been instrumental in founding the [chuckles] Chamber of Commerce.

You're a leader, obviously! [laughter]

They were very interested in putting in a flood light so that it could be seen for anyone driving all the way across Reese River at night. But they said they couldn't possibly put it in unless there was a fence round it to protect it. So I contributed a chain link fence which of course was a real challenge to everybody to how to get over it or under it or around it. And the chain link fence didn't really do

the things that it was designed to do, but we decided to put in a sign on the outskirts of Austin mentioning that Stokes Castle was an historic building and it is in the Federal Historic Preservation. It's really quite unique. Governor Paul Laxault, decided to come out and dedicate the sign. So this was a great event and the Chamber of Commerce was thrilled to have him and I was thrilled to have him—although I knew the Laxault family very well, all of them. And Paul came out and we had a luncheon for him, but before he came there was a great deal of preparation going on and one of the things that had happened to Stokes Castle over the years was that the white stucco walls inside the castle had graffiti written all over them and we really felt that Governor Laxault wouldn't like to see all of the graffiti—I didn't like it much either [laughs], and so we painted it out. So in our innocence, we went to the luncheon and then we all got in the car and we led a procession to Stokes Castle and we flung wide the gates to the castle and to our complete consternation, somebody had been there ahead of us and the graffiti had all been replaced and I took one horrified look and so I quickly shut the door! [laughter]

I have one question. Is it just a coincidence that a relative of yours in such an isolated place as Austin, should have had a castle and then there you are. Was there any communication between you, or was this purely coincidental?

I think it was sort of coincidental.

An amazing story.

Yes.

And I've picnicked up there and I know...

Oh really?!

Oh yes, and I know that site and have pictures so you're doing wonderful things. While we're on that subject—and I know we want to get back to the university—there's a couple other things that you helped restore in Austin and in interviews with Bert Gandolfo and others, they said that you were responsible for helping restore...

St. George's Church.

Yes, St. George's Church. Want to tell us a little about that?

Yes, I was horrified when I came to Austin to realize that in those days we didn't have any church in Austin. There was no church going. Although Austin is a city of churches. We have the Methodist church, we have the Catholic church and we have the Episcopal church which is right on the highway. And I am an Episcopalian, but like most Episcopalians, I don't really work at it very hard, I just sort of am an Episcopalian. But the fact that all of these children were growing up in Austin with no church was a real shock to me. It wasn't that I wanted them to be going to church, it was just that I wanted them to have a chance to know about Christianity and what it was all about. So—and then if they chose never to go to church again, it was alright with me, but I just felt that there should be a church. So I contacted the Bishop in those days, I forget his name now, it was so many years ago, and asked him what we could do, and he said well if we would make the church safe so that people could go in it without thinking the roof was going to fall in on their heads, that they would arrange to have services there. So it was quite a project and I wrote to everybody including the Stokes family, who had ever had anything to do with Austin in the historic past, and the response was amazing. We got

enough money together to put a new roof on the Episcopal Church, and also to fix the stairs that went up to it, and to do all kinds of minor repairs. I have always loved Steuben glass so I contacted the people that make the Steuben glass and asked if they could design a cross to go on the altar, and we had a beautiful cross put there and we did restore the church and it was very interesting because when we restored the church, there suddenly was a great deal of activity from all the other denominations, and quite unwittingly I think I started a religious revival. [laughter] Now we've got all kinds of churches going in Austin. We have been very successful in at least restoring the Methodist church where Emma Nevada used to sing in the choir, although not as a church but it now is the town center and the building is safe and this is wonderful. The Catholic church, alas, is still in a rather uncertain position whether they're going to tear it down or whether they're going to keep it I don't know. But we have a Mormon church, we have a Baptist church, we've got all kinds of churches going and this is very nice.

And the one that's a town hail now is really another, like the Stokes Castle, so distinctive that when you arrive in Austin to see that, it's so beautiful. And then your other effect with that is that both Madge Bertrand and Estelle Shanks and some of them became ministers so that they could run the services.

Yes, I think this is lovely. Yes, it really is and it was a very touching service when they became ministers. I attended and also attended the hundredth anniversary of St. George's Church and it's very nice to feel that these churches—they have such an historic tradition, are still going.

Yes, and of course there's another factor where you were responsible with your leadership

because it takes leadership to get things done like that.

I'll tell you about leadership, you never do anything in Austin unless people ask you to do it, because Austin is very proud and it doesn't want to turn into a tourist trap, it is its own town and the Gandolfos and the Maestrettis and all of these wonderful families have been active in Austin and they like to do things their own way. And I have never, ever done anything in Austin that somebody didn't want me to do, and I think that's perhaps why I've been fairly successful as an inhabitant of Austin: I love it dearly and I think the people like me too, but I've never tried to push anything on Austin that Austin didn't want.

And everything you've done has been part of the historic part of Austin. Not new.

Not new, no. Well I'm not new either at this point. [laughter]

We're going to get back to your work with the university again because I'm very intrigued—here you're flying about—you said you took a little house. Was that in Reno?

Yes, that was in Westfield Village in Reno. My landlady was French, and I spoke French before I spoke English so we used to chat our way in French and I think that's the only reason she bought the house for me and I was very happy there but about six or seven years ago, I had quite a serious accident and wound up in the hospital for a long time at St. Mary's and my landlady called me one day and said that she hoped I was getting along—and I was getting along, and she said that she was sorry that she hadn't been able to come and see me, but as she was ninety-four years old, it was difficult for her to get around. You know it

never had dawned on me what age she was, she seemed completely ageless to me, and I panicked at the thought, so then I began to think, well she's ninety-four, she's not going to last much longer, but how I did underestimate her. Earlier this summer, I attended a party for her hundredth birthday. I could have stayed right there in Westfield Village instead of running all over Reno trying to find another place to live. [laughter] And I'm quite sure she's going to be good for quite a few—she's a very remarkable woman and she has full possession of all of her faculties. She's just as smart as she can be. She always was very smart. She's still very smart. [laughs]

That's an inspiration. So about how much time would you spend in Reno and what were some of your responsibilities and the things that you helped achieved in your new role as the first woman?

Well I never acted as a woman, particularly. I never have. Most of the things I've been interested in doing are the kind of things that men do—but while I was riding on the ranch, I found signs of very extensive Indian habitation. It was an interesting thing that there was very little archeological activity going on in the state of Nevada. Dick Shutler who worked for the Nevada State Museum, was an archeologist, but other than he, there were archaeologists who would come in from other institutions like Berkeley in California, had Dr. Robert Heizer, who was the head of their archeological department, and he had been raised in Lovelock. But he was forever fixated on the Lovelock Cave and that was the only place he ever went! And he would come up from Berkeley in the summer and go bringing some students with him and working in the Lovelock Cave. But I knew him and I knew his brother John Heizer and

so I discussed this with Dr. Armstrong, that we had no department of anthropology in the state of Nevada. Well, it wasn't so much shocking as we really were a "cow college" still, and there wasn't too much of that kind of thing going on in those days.

What time period are we talking about?

We're still in the early sixties. Consulting with Dr. Heizer, we decided that it should be possible to found a Department of Anthropology. With a great deal of assistance from Dr. Heizer and Berkeley and also a great deal of assistance from Dr. Armstrong, we did found a Department of Anthropology. It has grown and flourished and thrived and it is very active today, and we are able to provide advanced degrees in anthropology. There was a period in the seventies when the population became the predominant factor, and as there aren't very many people who live in the rural areas, the number of regents from the rural areas were reduced, and when my term of office ended, there was nothing that I could run for, so I was off the board of regents.

What year was that when you went off?

In 1972. But they didn't sort of let me go, they kept me fully occupied and that was the year I gave the commencement address at the university, and it was a great honor to give the commencement address and they gave me an honorary degree in anthropology—a Doctorate of Science. And I had, at that point, done a great deal of archeological work—I had published in various publications and I had done a great deal of site surveying. I had surveyed eighty sites of pottery and it was not known that there was any pottery—it was an aceramic area. And when I produced eighty pottery sites, that was pretty exciting. So they

gave me this Doctorate in Anthropology. Also, I gave the commencement address that year, and it was the most popular commencement address that anybody's ever given because it was the shortest. [laughter] I had sat through a great many very long commencement addresses—the first one was the longest one in history. Grant Sawyer who was running for governor at the time that I was running for the board of regents, and who I knew anyway, and a very fine man he is, had a friend who was the governor of Alaska. So the governor of Alaska came down and he gave us a full history of Alaska's past, present, and future, and it went on and on and on [laughter] and right then I knew that any commencement address that was going to catch anybody's attention had to be short. So mine was very short.

Now, when you proposed this Department of Anthropology, did you have anyone on the board who was against it? did it take a long time? or were they all responsive to this wonderful idea?

They were very responsive. We had a great deal of response and we did some work with Dr. Shutler who was doing work in Clark County at that time on a very interesting site, and he took us around and showed us various things and all of our members of the board of regents were there and we took photographs of everybody that was there and there was the most marvelous photograph of Dr. Anderson looking at some giant sloth dung which had been found in a cave quite near the Las Vegas site where Dick Shutler was working and he's holding some giant sloth dung in his hand which was ten thousand years old. The look on his face is absolutely wonderful. [laughter] And Fred Anderson went on to be the Chairman of the board of regents for many years. He was a wonderful,

wonderful member of the board of regents, but we had wholehearted support from all of the members of the board of regents.

Do you have any photographs of you giving these commencement addresses or in some of these activities?

Yes I do.

I wonder if I can copy any to add to the interview?

Yes indeed, certainly.

I have a wonderful place that copies really well.

Yes, I have a picture of myself giving a commencement address but my greatest interest during all the years that I was on the board of regents, and in the subsequent years, has been the College of Agriculture. This is my real love. And the College of Agriculture named a building after me.

Start from the beginning and slowly take me through all of that.

The first meeting that I went to of the board of regents, I was interested to see the new dean of the College of Engineering and the new dean of the College of Agriculture also attended. And the dean of the College of Agriculture had done something—I forget what it was now—to incur the wrath of the members of the board of regents, and he was reprimanded there. And I felt very badly for him because he was new. It was Dale Bohmont. He was the dean of the College of Agriculture during all of the years that I served on the board of regents—and I got in my car the next morning and drove to his house—in those days, the dean of the College

of Agriculture lived in the Old Questa House on the Questa property, which is where the main station farm is located. And I went and I knocked on the door and Dean Bohmont came to the door and I said, "I just wanted to tell you that I was new on the board of regents and there was nothing much that I could do about it, but that I have a great deal of interest in the college and I give you my wholehearted support." Well he gave me his wholehearted support. We worked together very closely, particularly to support various things that were happening out in the rural areas, like experiment stations and that kind of thing. So when he decided to name the building after me—it's right next to the building where the forest service has its headquarters. He had my old friend, the former Governor Grant Sawyer, come up and give a speech about me and my past and how we've known each other, and it was a very happy occasion.

What year was that when they named that after you?

That was in the seventies, too. Dean Bohmont is no longer dean, but I have felt a great deal of interest in the college and when I first came on the board, I was the liaison between the College of Agriculture and the board of regents. When I went off the board of regents, they nominated me to be a member of the Citizens' Advisory Board and because I was so familiar with it, and also a rancher, I became the chairman of the board.

When did you become chairman of the board?

When I went off the board of regents. I ran back as soon as I could, but I was on the board of regents for twenty years.

Wow.

Well, the two years that I was off the board, I might just as well have still been on the board. It was eighteen years actually, but it was twenty years for all intents and purposes. So in 1980, I decided that I had been on the board long enough, I had given twenty years on the board and the ranch was getting bigger and bigger. I had bought the ranch from Dick Magee and I had also bought up some of the neighboring ranches as they came on the market, and it was a full-time job being on the board of regents and a full-time job being a Regent. So I parted with being a regent because the university had grown. We had a university in Las Vegas, we had five community colleges, we had the DRI (Desert Research Institute) as a separate entity, we had the medical schools as a separate entity, we had the university press as a separate entity and it was a much more time-consuming job. When I first got on the board, we met once a month, but this was no longer the case and I couldn't do justice to being a Regent and I couldn't do justice to running the Grass Valley Ranch and so I had to make a choice and I chose the ranch. But I didn't give up on the College of Agriculture. So all in all, I have been on the advisory board since 1960, that's a lot of years, and every once in a while I'd say, "Really, we can't keep me on as chairman. Somebody else needs to have a chance." And so the Dean rather reluctantly—Dean Jones—submits my name, or submits the position of Chairman, and then somebody nominates me and they all re-elect me. [laughter] This happened just this summer. So I'm still the chairman of the advisory board!

Now when you were getting more and more active, how much time did you have to spend in Reno then?

Oh quite a lot more than I used to. It took a week or two every month and I just didn't

have that kind of time. Also we used to meet in Las Vegas and one of the things that really thrilled me was when I went off the board of regents, I thought, "Now I will never have to go to Las Vegas again," but unfortunately, DRI asked me to sit on its governing board, and I didn't realize that every other meeting of DRI was being held in Las Vegas. I quickly got off that board because I really didn't want to go to Las Vegas every five months. [laughter]

Did you find it hard to get help on the ranch while you were so busy here?

Well, no, not until I became really incapacitated with that accident that I had. There was never any problem. I looked after the cows and my husband, whom I married in 1968, Bill Knudtsen, managed the ranch. He did all of the other part of the ranch other than looking after the cows, and the cows were my babies. But it's a ranch where there's a lot of farming and there's a lot of things to be done and Bill has all kinds of bright ideas that I never would have thought of, like running a pipe line down from the Callaghan Ranch and one thing or another. So as long as he was there and keeping an eye on the ranch, which he's still doing, I haven't been home since the last disaster that hit me in over two years.

So it's fortunate then that there's someone taking care of everything there.

Yes, he takes care of the ranch.

Now I want you to go into a little bit of detail about the College of Agriculture, especially for people from urban areas who don't understand. What are some of the degrees, what are some of the things that are taught the students, and where are these areas where they—cause I understand the agriculture college has property

and Hereford cattle in other places. Give us some idea of the scope of this college.

The college has undergone a very dramatic change in recent years and this is something that is very difficult to explain to people. Production agriculture, which was the main function of the college when I first came on the board, became increasingly unpopular with the young people, and the college has had to reorganize itself to meet the needs of the students because our student enrollment was falling dramatically. Production agriculture is hard work. The pay is very low, the work is very hard, the hours are twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year, and we were not attracting any students at all. But ecology has become one of the great major interests of the young people today. Also, there is a great deal of interest in biodiversity, in biological engineering, in many of the very scientific phases, also veterinarian medicine which is in the forefront of many of the things that human medicine is also engaged in, is very popular. So we emphasize the things that seem to be of essential interest. Agriculture really basically produces food and people need food. But we also need to preserve this country that we live in and agriculture has also changed very much. People talk about Nevada agriculture, Great Basin agriculture, but global agriculture is basically what we are confronted with today. What happens in other parts of the world is of tremendous importance to what happens right here. And unless we can think globally, we're not going to be thinking at all pretty soon. One of the things about the College of Agriculture that I learned—we had a fund raising here about six months ago and I signed fifteen hundred letters. [laughter]

Oh my!

Application to the alumni of the College of Agriculture and one of the things that I learned while I signed all those letters was that we were indeed global in the spread of our students. Our students, our alumni, were all over the world. We've got them going from the southern tip of South America and South Africa up into the Arctic Circle, it's very, very interesting how far flung we are. So what we do in our College of Agriculture today is of importance to what is being done all over the world. One of the things of course that is so exciting that we're doing today is biodiversity, and we have a very interesting program going in conjunction with Stanford University—well I won't get on that particular hobbyhorse 'cause it's not of too much interest to Lander County, but we are working all over the world today.

Are there students coming now to the University of Nevada in Reno from all over the country?

Yes, there are. Some of the faculty that we have been able to attract because of the subjects that we are studying today, have brought with them graduate students from all over the world. Dr. Joel Berger was doing research on black rhinos in Namibia on the Etosha Reserve and has just gotten back. He has graduate students from South America and from Africa—from everywhere in the world—and he has brought them with him to the University of Nevada and we are very excited to have these students here.

Fascinating. So it's a graduate course too, now.

Oh yes, we offer a Ph.D. in agriculture. We also are working very closely with other colleges. Our first student to graduate was Rick Sweitzer who received a Ph.D. last spring from UNR from a joint Ph.D. program

conducted by the colleges of Agriculture and Arts & Sciences, and he has been working on a project which is very dear to my heart—not very many people are interested—but it's in porcupines. [laughter] I am very much interested in porcupines because we used to have a lot of them in Grass Valley, and perhaps we still have in some parts of Grass Valley, but as far as the Grass Valley Ranch is, our porcupines have disappeared. Why did they disappear? and where have they gone? or have they just simply become extinct? Rick Sweitzer is working in the Granite Mountains north of Reno, north of Pyramid Lake, and right on the California line, and he has got a lot of porcupines up there and there are a lot of porcupines mound Pyramid Lake, in fact there are porcupines all over the place, but I don't have any porcupines anymore. Mine are gone. [laughter] We're wondering why they went and if they're up the canyons or where they've gone.

One of the things that I would like you to explain, because I think you can better than most of the people that I've interviewed, and it's so timely today and especially for people away from an urban area who don't really understand, me the grazing laws. The government, as you know, is trying to make some changes now, and in order for others to understand better, can you give a little background on the Nevada grazing laws?

They're federal grazing laws. Eighty-seven and a half percent of the state of Nevada belongs to the federal government, so we are more affected than any other state in the union with the exception of Alaska. We are very, very much affected because ranches in Nevada almost me forced to use the public domain, and so we work with the forest service and we work with the Bureau of Land Management. We resisted because of

the fact that it takes so much land to support one cow in Nevada, a hundred and fifty acres per one cow in central Nevada where Lander County is located, that we felt that it was not viable to be included with the other places where perhaps the public domain was more fertile, more lush because really and truly, central Nevada public domain is pretty tough. We have some good years but basically most of our years—it's very mountainous, it's very arid, and it's pretty tough. And I—after the rest of the state of Nevada went into the grazing district, central Nevada stayed out and we fought it tooth and nail. We fought it for ten years, we stayed out, and finally Senator McCarran forced us to accept the inevitable. Senator McCarran was an extraordinary man. He could sway an audience better than anybody that I have ever seen. [laughter] He could tell you that black was white and in no time at all, you believed that black was white. He was an orator of unparalleled ability. We had a meeting in Tonopah in the fifties and we had managed to stay out all those times, and he explained to us, "By the rights of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the public domain belonged to the federal government and they were trespassers and we would all be out of business". None of us had ever heard of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but somehow when those words came rolling out from Senator McCarran's lips, we realized that we were had, and so we went into a grazing district. [laughter] He was wonderful. The senator was marvelous.

One of the other things that I'd like explained and I haven't had it really explained, and I know in Grass Valley because of the Savals, they had sheep in the area and I hear a lot about the rivalry between the sheep and cattle. The sheep are pretty much gone from most of the ranchers that I interviewed in Lander County.

Can you tell me a little bit about that rivalry and why did the sheep disappear?

The sheep disappeared for a number of reasons, all of which were economic. There just wasn't money in it, although Paul Inchauspe in Reese River has a mixed operation which he inherited from John LaBorde and the thing that was difficult about the sheep was that they were herded, and because they were herded and held closely together, they were quite destructive of the range. The cattlemen fought them bitterly. In fact Dick Magee's grandfather, Joe Dean, had horses and cattle and he fought the sheepmen who in those days—this is back in the 1880s—ran pretty much wherever they wanted. They were called tramp sheepmen, they had no base. He fought them tooth and nail and sometimes if they had a base, he bought them out, and sometimes he ran them off and he had an argument with one of the tramp sheepmen and he shot him and killed him. So there was a very strong tradition.

Bitter.

Very bitter feeling, and home of the sheep that operated in Grass Valley—George Wingfield owned the Grass Valley Ranch at one point, and he had sheep and cattle both and one of his herders was shot and killed in Grass Valley and this caused a very bitter memory in the living memory of a lot of people. Actually what caused the sheepmen to go out of—numerically pretty much out of business—was that the money wasn't there. Synthetics replaced wool, and this made it very difficult when the price of the wool went way down because that was very, very strongly supportive. And also there isn't really very much demand for eating sheep. A new kind of dog food's just come out with mutton and

vegetables and my dog just loves it. [laughter] He's mad about it! and it just came out, and perhaps this is the way to go, I don't know. But the numbers are not there anymore.

Well one of the things I was wondering, just like when the barite came from China and that dropped the prices, did wool come from other countries and cheaper to sell here? Was that also a factor?

Yes, New Zealand has a great many sheep and so has Australia, yes.

I was curious about that because most of them—even the Inchauspes—and I've interviewed them—have less and less sheep.

Oh yes.

Yes. Now I want to open up the field to you back to your university activities which I find intriguing for a ranching woman and a city woman and an unusual mixture. Whatever else that you're involved with or more that you can tell about you and the university. You've told of some dramatic changes in the growth. What are some of the other things in your role there that you have been so influential and are so pleased to see.

The Desert Research Institute was just beginning to start when I first came on the board of regents and I was very much interested. It is a completely research-oriented institution and the original director, Wendell Mordy, and his wife, were very dear friends of mine. They really brought a national advisory board in of people who were outstanding scientists and the kind of work that they do and are doing still today in atmospheric physics and in water use, has been of tremendous importance to the state

of Nevada and to the rural areas. Dr. Maxey, who was a member of the faculty of the Desert Research Institute, was particularly interested in the development of ground water and he believed that he had located an underground ocean, really, of water at tremendous depth that lay under a large part of the Great Basin. It lay under parts of Utah and also eastern and northern Nevada. And as the cities have grown, the interest in this underground ocean has grown too, and there is a movement afoot today to dig wells and drain this and send the water to Las Vegas and to Reno. There's been a great deal of interest in this, but those of us who live in the rural areas realize that if they drain the ground water, that we are going to wind up living in something like the Sahara Desert. I have been very much interested in some of the work that's being done by the Bureau of Land Management. I have served on the grazing board of the Bureau of Land Management, but in recent years, I have served on a commission which is of tremendous interest to me. I serve in my capacity as an archeologist, but of course, once a rancher, always a rancher, and I also serve as a rancher. I have learned a great deal about what the Bureau of Land Management has been doing in the past. Of course with all of the changes that have come about since Mr. Babbitt and Mr. Clinton have come into power, they intend to completely renovate all of our government agencies and I hope the kind of work that is being done by the Bureau of Land Management won't be lost, because they are interested in preserving the archeology, in preserving the biodiversity. On this board, we have horse interests, we have archeological interests—that's me—we have ranching interests. Tony Tipton is presently the chairman of that board. And we also have the mining interests. The mining interests have been very informative to me. I learned

a great deal about what the mining interests were doing to preserve the archeological sites to control the cyanide ponds which were killing the migratory fowl. This is a truly diverse group and it's not well-known that this has been active, and if it gets lost in the shuffle, I was supposed to go to a meeting next week in Tonopah and we were going to have a meeting and then we were going to go to Sand Springs Valley.

To where?

Sand Springs Valley which is in Eureka County, it's all in central Nevada really, and it's part of District Six which is the grazing district that I'm representing, and we were going to go look at the archeological site and also at the oil wells and also at the gas wells—all of the things that were going on down there, but because of the changes in the entire program of the Bureau of Land Management, it was canceled as of yesterday. I called our director and asked him what had happened and why he had canceled it and he said that he hadn't canceled it, it was orders from Washington to cancel all of it because it was going to be changed completely.

Now is this institute a body of people or does it have a location?

It has a location, but every area—there are six different grazing districts in Nevada and we are number six. Our district comprises Lander, Eureka, and Nye County; parts of Nye County, not all of it. So there is a location but the people that serve on that location live in those areas.

Let's get back to the Desert Research Institute. That intrigues me, what they're doing in the [development] of underground water. I'd like

to know a little [more about] that. Is that going on here at the university?

Yes.

And actually in this location in Reno?

In Reno, yes.

I see. And you're also on that?

I'm no longer on it. They met every other meeting in Las Vegas so I left them.

Okay, but they're still going strong?

Oh yes, they're still going strong.

That's fascinating to hear. I don't know if a lot of people know about that either. So it's just amazing to me all that's going on at the university that you've been involved with and all the new developments.

The university is having an ecological meeting in November and I'm one of the featured speakers at this group. I am talking about the rural West as a colony, because I feel that there is a colonial mentality. The people in the East come to the West—our various senators and representatives in Congress—they visit the West and then they go back to Washington and they tell us how to run it. This absolutely enrages me! [laughter] It seems to me that we should be in a position to manage our own affairs, but that's not the sort of a feeling that the East knows how to handle the West. They've made a real mess in the East so I don't really think that they're qualified to tell us what to do in the West.

Do you have strong representatives in Congress and Senate from the West?

Yes we do.

Are they activists?

Yes. We have some very fine representatives from the West, and as a matter of fact, they fought off the raise in the grazing fee which was going to be so devastating to the ranchers in Nevada and also the high taxation on the mining interests. You know, mining and ranching were what made this state originally and it would be sad to see mining and ranching give place to recreation and that kind of thing.

The last thing that I want to ask you about is what you envision in the next decade in Nevada—most particularly Lander County and the things that you've been talking about that affect Lander County. Do you see—one of the things that I've observed as an outsider, but spending most of my time here for the last six months, practically living here and loving it, and worked here three years ago and spent a great deal of time—because I come from another region where there's such a bad economy, it seems like Nevada is thriving, especially compared to other places, like California. There seems to be employment. I go all over the state and I see busy people working, roads being built, new mines opening, and I see such a positive thing. Tell me though, as someone who has lived here for so long and probably knows a lot, what do you envision this state, which relates to Lander County, what do you envision in the next decade?

I envision a very perilous future. I don't know whether we're going to be able to maintain our gambling economy, because gambling is taking place all over the world and particularly all over the United States, and this is going to have a very strange affect

on the economy of this state. And whether we are able to keep the mining—if the mining goes, it will be devastating to this state, particularly the rural parts of the state. Elko is built entirely on the mining, Battle Mountain is built entirely on the mining. Eureka is built entirely on the mining, and they are very prosperous today. But they took the mining away from Ely and Ely at this point, has got the highest unemployment rate of any county in Nevada because the mining was shut down. And if the gold mining goes, the silver mining goes, and the other precious metals that we have in this state are shut down, I think that the fate of our rural economy is going to be very strongly affected. And also if the ranching goes. The ranching employs a great many people who don't appear to be really connected with ranching: we buy our groceries in the state of Nevada, we buy our clothes in the state of Nevada, we buy our machinery in the state of Nevada, we buy everything. We buy our fuel—we buy everything. It's going to be devastating if we are shut down. I don't really feel that we can depend entirely on tourists. Maybe we can, but it doesn't look like it to me, and the future is very cloudy right now. I gave a talk about a week ago to the Farm Bureau. Most of the talks that I give are commencement addresses. I've given commencement addresses in all the small towns all over Nevada and I love doing it. In fact, I even gave one at the university, but what I like to do is to talk to people about what they want to hear and to tell them what they want to hear. But when I spoke to the Farm Bureau, I didn't do that. I told them what I thought they ought to hear, and the hazards that are lying in wait for us, and the fact that we numerically are outnumbered. Two percent of the population of the United States of America today is engaged in farming and ranching—two percent.

Just two?!

Two, yeah. Now if we don't join forces with the ecological people, with all sorts of historic preservation people, with anybody that we can find that shares the same interests that we do, we're gone, we're dead. One of the things that the commission that I serve on for the Bureau of Land Management has taught me is that we do share the same interests, that we have common interests with the mining people, with anybody that uses the public domain. And we do indeed use the public domain as ranchers, and Lander County is tied to our fate.

The other thing I've observed, but I don't know the result, and tell me this: I've seen figures and I know from the fast exit from California, all the people that are moving to Nevada, the Las Vegas area in particular has increased more than any other place. I see them moving to Fallon, Miramar is moving to Fallon, what are those effects?

I think that if we don't slow ourselves down to where we can handle the water, a lot of these people that are coming in are going to wonder why they came here if they don't have enough water. The water is really the key, and if they take the water from the rural parts of Nevada to supply the needs of the cities, the rural parts are going to suffer the fate of the Sahara Desert. So there are challenges in the years ahead and how we are going to be able to surmount them, or live with them, I don't know, but just as the College of Agriculture is being forced to change, I think that the state of Nevada is going to be forced to change, for the simple, basic reason of survival. I hope that we will survive. I love this state and I love Lander County and I love Austin and we'll just see what happens.

Well I've grown to love it too and I think if we have more dynamic people like you who take the time to learn and utilize their experiences and knowledge, I see a great future. I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for sharing such wonderful and informative information with us today.

Well, it's been a pleasure to talk to you. Thank you very much.

This is the end of the interview.

MOLLY FLAGG KNUDTSEN
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.

Nevada State Journal Sunday, July 7, 1974--7

Facts Debunk Romantic Legends

Skeleton of Castle in Nevada Desert

By MARLYN NEWTON
Staff Writer

On a mountain crest overlooking a cold expanse of desert stands the skeleton of a castle, deserted for the most part since the end of the Austin mining boom.

Legend has it the castle, with its arched lower windows, was built for a woman who pined her life away within its prison-like walls. Other legends mention buried treasure and a secret underground tunnel.

Still another says the castle was built so the owners could spy on a mine foreman whom they suspected of highgrading.

But they are only legends although the true history is romantic.

Its builder, J. G. Phelps Stokes, a mining tycoon, spent his boyhood days in Rome. Outside that city there stood a tower which apparently left its mark on the young boy.

Even after coming to the United States and maturing, the idea of the tower stayed with him. There was

even a picture of it hanging in his Philadelphia library.

When the need came to build a place in Austin for his frequent stopovers after purchasing mining and railroad property, there the idea of the tower probably came to him.

In a letter from J. G. Phelps Stokes, son of the tycoon, to a Nevada cousin Molly Magee Knudsen, he mentioned the painting of the tower and also the fact the building was the simplest he could build that would answer his purposes, that of convenience and a comfortable place to stay and "enjoy the superlative sunsets."

The younger Stokes added "I among them spent many a wonderful summer evening on its (the castle) balcony enjoying the truly entrancing beauty of the desert, spread for such a distance before us."

The elder Stokes owned the Austin Mining Company and the Nevada Central Railroad which ran from Austin to Battle Mountain and joined with the Central Pacific.

It was 1862 that silver was discovered along the Reese River,

Landmark Preserved By Cousin

causing Austin to grow to be the second largest city of that time. More than 10,000 men were employed by the mines.

The narrow-gauge railroad was begun in 1867 to haul ore the 85 miles from Austin to Battle Mountain.

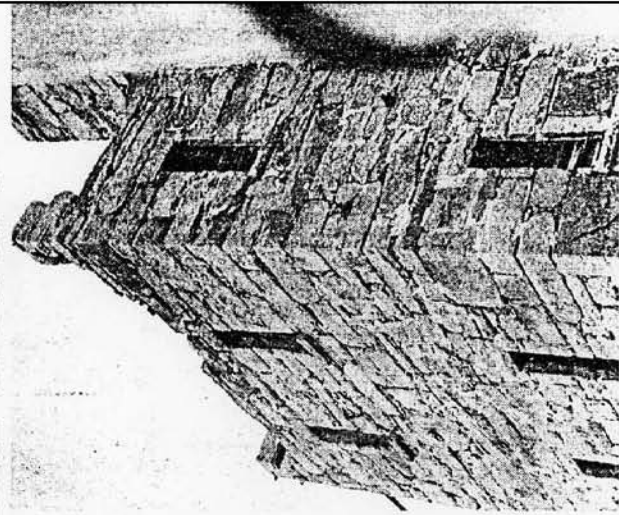
But it wasn't until 1866 that Stokes apparently felt the need to build a residence. After the lower end of Austin was settled, a road was cut from Austin to the prospect site.

Granite rock was hand-hewn into blocks and hauled by team to the castle site from as far as three miles away. The building was 50 feet by 50 feet and although originally planned to be only two stories high, a third was added before completion.

Supports for the flooring were rails from Stokes' own railroad. The ends of the rails can still be seen protruding from the building. Balconies extended from the second and third floors and a trap door in the roof which was surrounded by a parapet and included an open fireplace.

The lower of the castle is actually the chimney for the flues of the various fireplaces located on the northern side of the building.

The lower level was the dining room and kitchen while the second floor was used as a living room and two



bedrooms occupied the third story. The castle was piped for running water and even included modern plumbing, or at least what was considered modern plumbing at the time. The bedrooms were located on the higher stories.

Windows were heavy plate glass and the lower windows included iron bars.

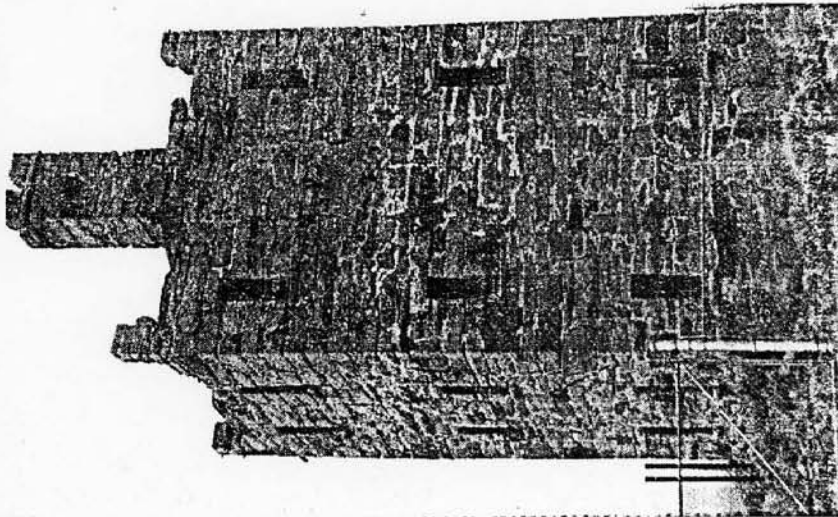
Cost of the castle was estimated at about \$10,000 quite a substantial sum considering the Stokes used the castle for little more than a year.

By that time the boom had ended, the mines had petered out and closed down and the elder Stokes had been seriously hurt in an accident and was prevented from going West again.

Since the tower or castle was no longer needed by Stokes or his family it was sold. Finally it was left uncoccupied and by about 1907 it had already begun falling into a state of decay.

Early in this decade it gained attention once again when Las Vegasans wanted to move the castle to "the Strip."

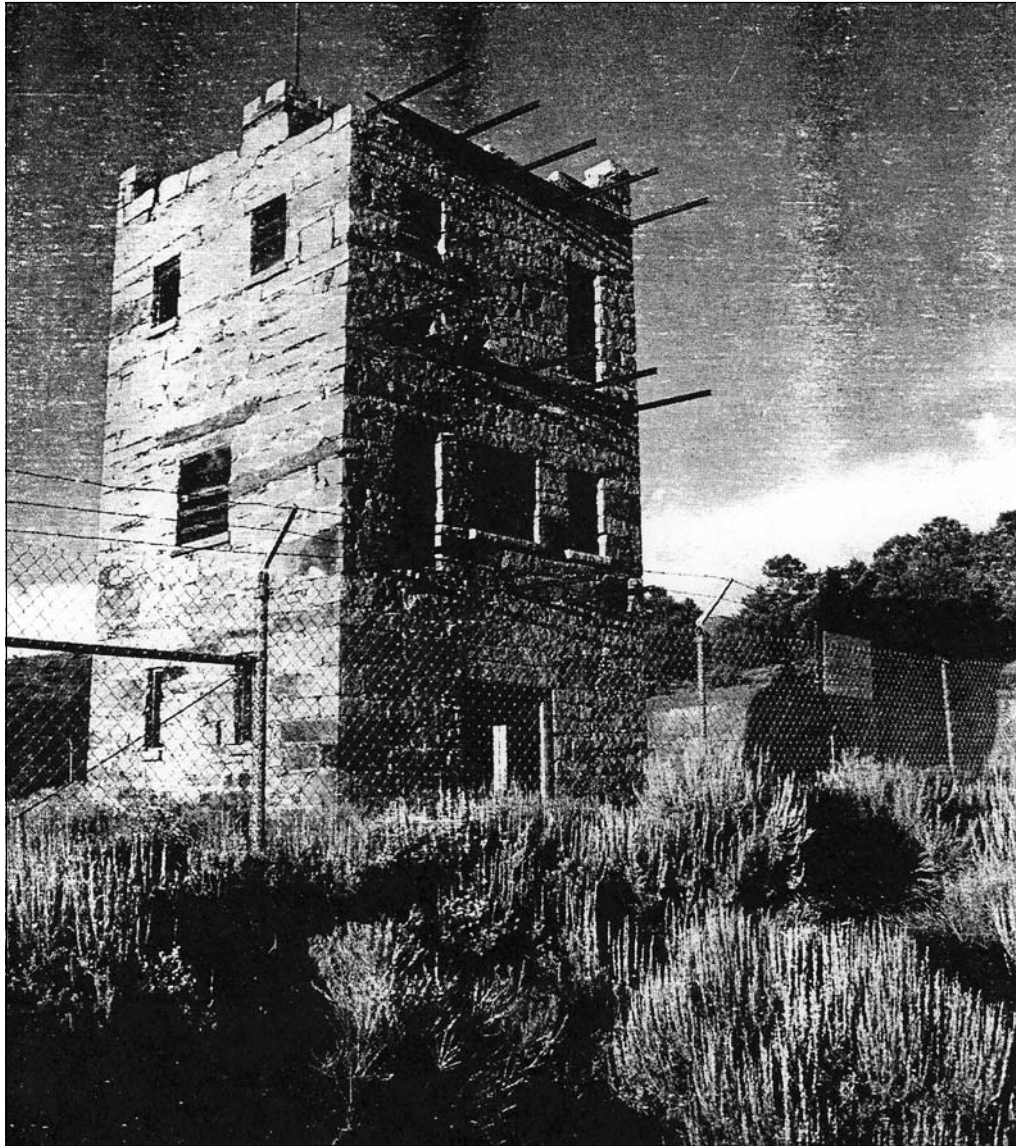
But Mrs. Knudsen, the cousin of Stokes, took action and after contacting the then owners made arrangements to purchase the castle herself. It remains in her possession to this day and still stands as a landmark for travelers going across Nevada.



Sentinel Over Desert

Stokes Castle today stands like a deserted lonely sentinel looking over the desert below.

(Photos by Don Hagblom)



Caption: Stokes Castle perseveres on its perch above Reese River Valley.

(Photograph by Gary Elam)

MOLLY FLAGG KNUDTSEN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Molly Flagg Knudtsen Interview

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ELEANOR MOLLART LEMAIRE**PREFACE**

Eleanor Mollart Lemaire, born in Aspen, Colorado in 1902, was four years old when the family moved to the new mining camp in Goldfield, Nevada, then to the Buckskin mining camp. When the mining camps closed, her father and mother ran a general store and a livery stable. Eleanor decided when she was seven years old that she was going to be a teacher. The day she graduated high school, she went to Reno to take the teachers' examination. She saved her salary from her first year of teaching to go to the University of Nevada, Reno, and when she got her degree was offered a position in Battle Mountain. Eleanor lived that year at Mrs. Dusang's boarding house with three other new teachers.

When she arrived, Battle Mountain was a disappointment because she thought it was going to be in the mountains. But her first view of the Battle Mountain School was a pleasant surprise. She describes it as "the best-built and best-planned school I've ever

seen." There were four teachers and they taught seven hours a day. She taught home economics, history, typing and dramatics. She also coached girls' basketball. The girls in her home economics class canned vegetables and fruit and learned how to plan and serve meals to their families. There were Indian children in the school when she taught; in earlier days they had their own Indian school. Eleanor not only started a school lunch program but with one helper, cooked and served the children. She taught for fifty years, and says her former students are her best friends.

Eleanor married Louis E. Lemaire, the grandson of A. D. Lemaire from Calais, France who came with his wife and three sons to Battle Mountain in 1876 and established the Lemaire store. When Louis' father had a stroke in 1954, Eleanor left her teaching job and she and Louis started running the store. Since Louis was a County Commissioner, she did most of the work—kept the books, waited on customers, swept the snow off the roof in winter. She started work very early every morning, picking up the newspapers at 5:00 a.m. and fixing

sandwiches for the men headed out to the mines. A bread train came in the afternoon and she took a handcart over and got the bread off the train. Eleanor even started a library in the store which she calls, "the smallest, most-loved library in Lander County in the sixties." The big hall above the store was the only meeting place in town. It was used by all the lodges and was the only place for dances. Eleanor figured that A.D. Lemaire must have had visions of the future, and knew that people needed a place other than a saloon to just see other people.

Eleanor and Louis had two children and she tells of summers camping on the Humboldt River in tents, fishing, swimming and boating. Weekends family and friends would join them, bringing food for potluck. They always went deer hunting and Eleanor loved to skin deer and make beef jerky with the deer meat. She also could skin a good-sized beaver in fifteen minutes. They caught a lot of beaver on the river and sold the skins to furrier companies. There are still thirty-five beaver hides in her basement.

Eleanor lives alone in the A. D. Lemaire home, filled with artifacts and memories from the past. An independent, vibrant woman, Eleanor still hooks rugs, plays bridge, cooks, gardens, and can be seen walking briskly about town. Her interview reveals a life filled with adventure, hard work and courage.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Eleanor Lemaire at her home, at 295 South Broad, Battle Mountain, Nevada, June 14, 1993.

Good morning, Eleanor. Thank you for allowing me to come to interview you this morning. Would you please tell us your full name?

Eleanor Lemaire: My name is Eleanor Mollart Lemaire.

And where were you born?

I was born in Aspen, Colorado.

What was the date?

June 1, 1902.

What was your father's name?

My father's name was Edward Watson Mollart.

Do you know where he was born?

Dubuque, Iowa.

And your mother's name?

Eleanor Watson Tiplady. She was also born in Dubuque, Iowa.

You were named after your mother then?

Yes.

How long did you live in Colorado?

I lived there until I was four years old.

And then where did your family move?

I moved to Goldfield, Nevada. We stayed there for several years.

What brought your family to Goldfield, Nevada?

When they were married, they came west in the first place to make their fortune

mining, like most people did that came west, and stopped in Aspen, Colorado, where the three children were born: my two brothers and myself. Then he didn't make a fortune there, so he went to the new mining camp in Goldfield, Nevada. After several years, he decided to go to another new camp in Buckskin, Nevada.

Can you tell me your brothers' names?

Yes, my oldest brothers name was George [b. 1898], the next one was Warren [b. 1901].

And then you were the third child?

I was the third child.

Do you have any recollections of life at any of these mining towns where your family lived?

The only thing that I can really remember about Aspen, Colorado, was the beautiful churches and the beautiful school buildings. And then I remember my father took me with him to chop the ice on the flume to get water to drink.

Do you remember anything about the mines in Nevada?

In Goldfield, no. I was only four years old. But the one thing I remember is that a friend of my mother's took my brothers and myself to the [James J.] Jeffries—and whoever he fought—fights. The thing I remember about it was leaning against a fence and watching all the gorgeous ladies with their big hats and their parasols and their skirts sweeping in the dust, carrying their pillows to go to sit on the grandstand at the fight.

Oh my! The fights, did you say?

The Jeffries—the big fighter at that time—Jeffries and [James J.] Corbett, I think. Of course my mother was a good Methodist, and she wouldn't go to things like that. And we didn't go to the fight—we went to see the people.

How long did you live at Goldfield?

At Goldfield, we probably lived there four or five years.

And then where did your family go?

We went to another mining camp called Buckskin, Nevada.

Do you remember anything about Buckskin?

Yes, I remember a lot of things about Buckskin.

Let's first talk about the kind of housing you lived in.

Well, it was almost impossible to get lumber in those days, because when it was taken off the train at any station, somebody stole it.

Oh, my goodness!

So if you ordered any lumber and expected it to be at, say, Buckskin, Reno, or wherever—you had to be there to get it.

Who would steal it?

People who wanted to build houses. Lumber was very scarce, so everybody stole it. My father persuaded a woman who ran a candy store in Buckskin to move out of it and let his family—which was myself, my two brothers and my

mother...So we moved into this candy store. The candy store was a tent, and it was lined with blue cambric. And every time the wind blew, the cambric blew and the dust came down between the canvas and the cambric. The first thing I did was go out and stumble over a tent peg, and cut my head. My father ran a general store there—which my mother took care of—and then the livery stable. He brought the water from a spring four miles down in the valley.

He was a very ambitious man, wasn't he?

Yes, he was—he did a lot of different things. The water was brought four miles in a tank and sold in Buckskin for fifty cents a bucket. So we were very saving of water. I don't think I ever got over that idea, because when they talk about the thousands of gallons that people use every day, it doesn't seem possible to me, to waste it.

Did your brothers have chores? They were older than you—did they have chores?

Well, they were too young for that.

Did they help carry the water with your father?

No, he brought it in a tank wagon. The horses wouldn't drink at the spring—they had to drink when they got home. There were just loads of things about Buckskin I can remember.

You said your mother took care of the store?

Yes.

So she took care of the store and you three kids?

Yes.

Busy time! How long did you live there? What age were you when you left Buckskin?

Buckskin, like many other mining camps, went broke—they all did. So my mother and father owning a store, everybody owed them, like they always do when towns go broke. So the people who weren't able to pay my father simply gave him all they had there, which was their little houses. So he took five of those houses down, and put them together and built a nice home. He was a farmer in the first place. His folks were very wealthy farmers near Dubuque, [Iowa]. Anyway, he moved all these houses and other things down in the valley.

Was that house for your family, instead of the tent, when he took those little houses?

Yes.

So you had a nice big house then?

Yes, he put those together. This end of the valley was the north end of Smith Valley, Nevada. And Smith Valley is between Carson Valley and Mason Valley. There's a huge valley there.

And how old were you when you went to that Smith Valley area?

I was ten years old when we left Buckskin.

Did he do ranching in Smith Valley?

Yes, we moved down then, and my father drilled wells. Other people came in there—three or four different families—and he drilled wells for all of them.

Do you remember much about your childhood there?

Yes, I remember a lot. One thing that I remember: there was a family who lived north of us, and we could not see them in the daytime—they were lower. But we had wonderful mirages. People speak of mirages, and they think that they're not there. But they are there—they simply are raised up. We could look out there and the mirage was on, and see the people feeding their chickens, just as plain as if we were right looking at them.

Oh my goodness! How long did your family live in Smith Valley?

They stayed in Smith Valley for all the rest of their lives.

When I was in Buckskin, just things that I remember about life there, we had one orange a year, which was Christmas. At Christmastime you were given an orange, and that's the only fresh fruit that I remember in all the years that we lived there. In the store, there was a box of raisins, a box of dried apricots, a box of dried apples. Instead of giving us candy, when we wanted a treat, we went in and got a handful of dried fruit. So we had fruit, but it was always dried fruit.

Did you go all through your elementary school then in Smith Valley?

Yes.

Where was the school?

When Father moved the houses from Buckskin, Nevada, down on the flat, he moved

the Miners' Union Hall down, and that was our schoolhouse on the flat.

How far was it from where you lived? Could you walk?

Yes, we walked. It was about a mile, I think, from where we lived. The schoolhouse from where we lived in Buckskin, where we moved from, was about four miles. We went back and forth in a cart.

Did you go all through elementary school there? Did you finish your school there?

Yes.

Did you go to high school there too?

No, there was no high school.

Through eighth grade?

We went to that school, there were eight children in the grammar school. And then when I was ready for high school, my older brother wasn't, so I had to stay home a year.

After two years [with emotion], my brother went to the Army, the oldest one. We lived in a little house then, in Yerington, and we finished our school there. I went to high school three-and-a-half years.

Did you make a lot of friends in Yerington during high school?

No, because we weren't there except to go to school.

I thought you said you and Warren lived in a house there.

Yes, we did, for a year, but then we didn't make any friends either. We went home Friday night and came back Monday morning, and that sort of thing.

While you were in high school, did you begin to determine the subjects you liked best and what you wanted to do?

[chuckles] No, I decided when I was seven years old what I was going to do!

You're kidding me! [laughter] And what was that?

I was going to be a teacher.

And you knew that so young! Very few people know what they want to do when they're a little child.

Well, in those days, there weren't the variety of things to do.

Uh-huh, for women especially.

I think I fell in love with my first-grade teacher.

Oh, isn't that sweet? So then tell me, after high school, what did you do?

Let's talk a bit about high school.

Yes, let's do that.

I remember the principal, Mr. Bleasedale, and the English teacher. She was a very petite little woman, a very lovely person—one of those teachers that helped you learn and saw that you did learn.

Was she a role model for you?

I guess. A group of the high school girls—they were older than I, probably—decided I was going to smoke, because they knew I hated smoking. Anyway, they got me down on the floor and sat on me, and were trying to put a cigarette in my mouth.

Oh gee! Like college hazing!

Anyway, I brought my knee up and broke the jaw of the girl who was sitting on me. So they never bothered me after that! So I did none of the things that weren't supposed to be done in school.

Oh, that's wonderful! Did you go to dances? Did you dance?

Yes, we had dancing school in Yerington, and my folks took us. We learned to waltz, which as far as I'm concerned, is the only real dance yet.

Did you have any beaus?

There was a boy that lived down where we did, who moved to Yerington to go to school. [pause] I'm trying to think how to put it. Anyway, he had asked me to go to a dance, I guess, or to the movies, or something. My cousin said to me that I thought I was smart because I was going with him, but she could take him away if she wanted to, so she got him to take her instead of me. But anyway, that was my first lesson in sex, I guess, or whatever you call it. [laughter] And it was good for me, because after that I never trusted any man, for years, which was a good thing—kept me out of trouble for a lot of years! [laughter]

What were the subjects you liked the best in high school?

Gosh, I don't know, I always liked school from the beginning to the end. I couldn't tell you—I mean, I don't think I had any favorite subjects.

You just liked all of school. Now, what did you do when you finished high school?

The day we graduated, there was a girl there—not in the graduation class, but an older girl who we knew. And she told us that she was going to go take the teachers' examination and get a teaching certificate. And so I asked my mother if I could go with her. She said, no—my dad said I could.

Where was it that you had to go?

I had to go to Reno.

Oh my! How did you travel there?

In a car—my brother took me in a car. I don't remember too much about that, but I remember getting lost in Reno [chuckles], if you can believe it! Reno wasn't anything like it is now. Anyway, I took the teachers' examination and I passed with wonderful grades in every subject except United States history, and they failed me in that. And I was really disgusted, as well as amazed, because I knew nothing about teaching—and these things were How would you teach arithmetic? How would you teach this and this? They gave me a ninety-eight in those. And I had just finished a course in United States history in high school, of course. The reason [I failed] was, the educators decided that people didn't know enough United States history, so I had to go to summer school. So I went to summer school that summer and took...

Where was that? in Reno?

Yes, at the University of Nevada in Reno.

Where did you live?

At the dormitory, which was a wonderful place to live in those days. Dormitories aren't anything like they were when I was there.

That must have been an exciting summer for you.

Yes, it was, it was very interesting. But I stayed at Manzanita, of course, and Miss Margaret Mack was matron there. Of course she was there for many, many years. It was just sort of a transition period between home and life, you know. Nowadays, it seems to me that children have to just jump out of high school right into life, with no transition.

How did that feel? Were you ready for that independence?

I guess so.

You weren't homesick or anything?

No, I never was homesick. Then I taught in the same little school that I went to school in, the Miners' Union Hall, in Artesia. The place was called Artesia, by the way.

Was that where your family lived?

That was the community that my father started by moving these houses and drilling the wells for people there.

Is that from the artesian wells?

Yes. The wells in those days were artesian wells. Nobody thought of pumping water. There was one well that he drilled on an

eight-inch casing that the water came up eight inches above the casing, just by itself. It was beautiful—I have pictures of that, I think.

Tell me in detail about your first teaching job. Where did you live while you taught?

I lived at home, and taught in my old school. I had my three brothers—a younger brother and my two older brothers, and four other children, because there were seven children who went to school there.

Where was your younger brother born? In Artesia?

Yes. He's eleven years younger than I am.

Oh my! That's a wide difference. You were his teacher?

I had another brother born when I was seven, born in Buckskin. And then the youngest one was born when I was eleven.

And you were the only daughter?

I was the only girl.

The only girl in a bunch of boys. Did they give you a hard time? [both chuckle] Or is that what made you strong?

We didn't have time to have any trouble, I don't think. You'd think of children fighting, but we didn't fight. But then when we moved to the ranch and started ranching, we were all very busy there.

Now let's go to your teaching. Tell me what that was like. Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

Yes, that I taught that first year, yes.

How did you find that first year? Was that hard?

No, it was just like going back to school. The teacher was myself, but other than that, the school was just what I was used to going to. But I made nine hundred dollars that year. With that money [with emotion] I started to college.

So you had goals. You had some ambition there.

Oh, I don't know.

Where did you go? to the University of Nevada?

To the University of Nevada [Reno]. I lived in Manzanita. Four years I went there. The first year I went, I took Normal school. I got my one-year Normal certificate, but I didn't go on with it. I had taught school and I couldn't see how you could use the things that they told us to do and still get by. That year I worked in what we called the Goo [pronounced Gow] House, the dining room. I don't know where that word came from either. The next year I took Home Economics, and I liked that, so I went on with that. That year I worked in the library and the Home Economics room, doing the linens. During those years, I catered at night, catered for dinners. A girlfriend of mine, Dorothy Whitney from Fallon, and I—and they paid us for coming in. The woman would have the dinner just about ready, and then you'd finish the dinner and wait on the table and clean up.

You were ambitious, hard-working.

So anyway, we made quite good money at that, because they paid us well. Of course the people that we went to were all screened. Miss Mack screened everything she let the

girls do—that was another thing. Then the third year, the last year I guess, I worked in the Chemistry storeroom. The boys used to laugh and say they expected me over on that side of the campus the next year—but I didn't go.

Did you go home summers, or work summers?

No, I went home summers. To go back to my freshman year in college, in the dormitory: I had a roommate, Adeline Marialdo from Eureka. She cried and cried, and we tried to get her to stop.

Was she homesick?

She said that she hated everybody: She hated us, she hated the college, she hated the school. All she wanted to do was go home and marry Tom Kelly.

Oh, she was in love!

So finally I went to Miss Mack and I told her that I couldn't take it any longer after about six weeks. So she phoned her people, and her family came and got her and took her back to Eureka, and she did marry Tom Kelly.

Did you get another roommate?

Yes. I think Helen Duffy from Tonopah gold field. There's still Duffys down there, I think.

So you went for four full years and got a degree in Home Economics?

Y a minor in chemistry, and an education certificate.

Wow! And then what did you do?

In my senior year, all the schools from around the state, I think, came and vied for a prize. They all had to do something. Anyway, the head of vocational home economics in the state was there and she took me aside and told me that she had a position for me if I wanted it. She said that Battle Mountain wanted a home economics teacher, and she had recommended me and all I had to do was write and tell them I would come and they'd send me a contract, which I did.

So you didn't even have to look for a job—they came to you.

Didn't look for a job, I didn't ask for a job! [chuckles]

You must have been a very good student.

So anyway, that's how I happened to come to Battle Mountain, Nevada. I was very disappointed when I came here, because I thought it was going to be in the mountains.

Oh, that's right! Battle Mountain! Now, how old were you when you came to Battle Mountain?

I was twenty-three, because I graduated in 1925.

Now, tell me your first impression of "the town that wasn't a mountain." [laughter]

Let's see, we got off the train over at North Battle Mountain, and the stage met us. On that train was a boy from the university, and I had seen him on the campus, but I didn't know him. Anyway, he was coming as an assayer for the Midas Mine—there isn't any mine there any more. Let's see, I got ahead of myself. When I was going to come to Battle Mountain, people knew that I was coming, I

guess. I don't think I ever wrote here. Anyway, Mrs. Helen Lemaire wrote me a letter and told me that she wanted me to stay with her and what a good time we would have: we would play bridge and we would do this, that, and the other. And then an older lady named Mrs. Dusang said she was taking teachers. So anyway, my mother read the letter from Helen and she said, "You're not staying there because you're going to Battle Mountain to work—you're not going to party." So anyway, the stage left me off at Mrs. Dusang's, which is where Carmen and Butch Hinman live now. That same year, two other teachers came here. They didn't come with me on the stage, but one was Prof. Chester who taught in the grammar school.

What was his first name?

I called him Prof. Chester. I don't know what his name was, I never heard his name.

Oh, I see, Professor, Prof. Chester.

The other was Mabel Miles, who came from the Midwest. She was a music teacher, and she was the best music teacher that the country ever had, too, I'll tell you—she was *really* good. We used to have sings after PTA meetings in those days. Everybody would go into the hall which was part of the grammar school. And I remember the young people of the town would come. They would *all* come—there weren't too many—and they would sit on the table in the back and would sing. You couldn't keep them home from a PTA meeting, in other words. Mabel would say, "Now you're going to sing bass, and you're going to sing alto," and people would say, "We can't sing anything!" She'd say, "Oh yes you can!"

And they could!

She'd divide us up. Anyway, PTA meetings in those days were exciting things. They were an event, in other words.

Now, I want to go back to when you first arrived. You were telling me there was some fellow [on the same train].

Well, he didn't come [into town]. He stayed on the stage.

You were telling me about Mrs. Dusang.

Yes. She was a small, rather round, old lady, and very nice.

How many lived at her house?

Mabel Miles and Prof. Chester and myself. And then there was a man who was a barber: we called him "Googy." [laughter] I imagine that he did chores for her at the same time.

Did she have a family living there?

No, she was a widow. Her husband used to be a saloon keeper, I think.

What was the house like then? Was it like it is now?

I don't think they changed it very much.

It was that big?

It was that same size.

Did you have your own room?

Yes, Mabel and I each had a room, and then Chester's room was in front. There was an old lady that lived across the street from her, about the same age or a little younger, I

guess, and they used to play deucey-acey all night.

Now tell me, did you have your meals there?

Yes. She was a good cook. I don't remember too much about the meals, except desert. I remember she was going to throw away an apple pie because it was a day old, and I ate it. [laughter]

The whole pie?!

No, what was left. I said, "Don't throw it away! I don't care whether it's a day old or not."

Describe, when you were teaching and living there, one typical day. From the time you got up, kind of describe that day to me, and the evening—a work day, and then we'll go to a weekend.

Well, let me tell you the first day I came: The school board had told me to come a week early so that I would get oriented. So the morning after I came, or Monday morning, I went up to the high school and there was a man fixing a cement step.

You were going to teach high school?

Yes. And I went in the high school, and there was one man in there working and he was painting around the windows. So I told him who I was, and he told me who he was. He was the principal of the school! So anyway, he told me he didn't see any reason for me coming back up there, because it was a year old, but it had never been finished. So anyway, that's all I did [during] that week that had to do with school! But I was out in the yard at Dusang's, and the Belaustegui family, of which there was... Let's see, there was Nash, Joe, Pela, Leon and

Delphina. Anyway, they drove up in a topless car, and old car, and asked me if I would like to go "ride the ups and downs," and I didn't know what that was. So anyway, we went down the River Road, and there's a lot of old channels on the other side. So it was up and down this way. And of course I screamed, and they had fun. But they were the first people that I met in Battle Mountain, and they were a wonderful family.

And then when you started teaching, what was a work day like from the time you got up?

I went to school about eight o'clock in the morning and got home [chuckles] about ten o'clock at night. That sounds silly.

Oh my gosh! Now, was there breakfast ready for you before you went to work?

Yes, I had breakfast. I don't know, there was always a lot of things to do. The school, of course, was the center of the town at that time.

Evening functions were held there?

We always had plays or basketball or dances or something.

Was part of your job to be a chaperon at those events?

Yes. Let's see now, there were four teachers Mr. Hollan, Mr. Sax—the carpentry teacher, Miss True, and me. I don't know what Miss True taught besides art—English I guess.

So there were four teachers? How many students?

There were four teachers and fifty-two students, that's all.

Did you each have a class? or you each taught different subjects to all of them?

We each taught separate subjects. During the years, I taught home economics and chemistry and physics, and some English classes, some history classes, and typewriting. Miss True and I divided the dramatics: she did part of it, and I did part of it. Of course I did all the costumes and that sort of thing. And then the girls wanted to play basketball. I didn't know anything about basketball, but anyway I was the only young person up there, and so I said, "Alright I'll try the basketball team." [laughter] So we did and I got a rule book. But we had basketball the three years I was there, and we went all over this part of this country and won games and whatever. In that day and age, of course, the parents took the teams.

In their cars?

In cars, because there were no school buses or anything.

How could you teach so many courses?

Well, there were seven hours in the day, and we taught all seven hours. Of course my home ec. was vocational home ec., and that took two periods.

Were some courses taught once a week?

No.

They were all every day?

They were all taught every day.

Oh, what a busy life you had!

It was busy, but you didn't have time to worry about what you didn't have or wanted to do, or whatever.

So really, your work was almost your whole life.

Well, in a way. But we did a lot of things on the side. Let's see, in the fall, the first thing was a community picnic. All the schools had a picnic then at one of the fields. Everybody went there. Then we used to go on walks around, as far as we could walk.

You mean with your students?

With the students. Of course in the winter there was skating. We used to skate all winter long.

Ice skating? And where would that be?

On the river.

Oh for goodness sakes!

In later years, my husband and I cut ice down there, eighteen inches thick!

During this first year, did you make friends? Did you have fellows? I'm sure you were a beautiful young woman.

Let's see, I was the "new girl on the block," yes. Everybody was your friend in those days. Nowadays the teachers can be in town ten years and you never know them. But in those days, everybody knew the new teacher because it was a new teacher. Everybody was nice, everybody spoke to you.

Did they invite you to different functions or meals?

No, we had all our meals at school.

Oh, they had a cafeteria?

No, but see, I guess vocational home economics is different than just home economics. In the fall we canned vegetables and fruits. We used to can three pints of everything: three pints of peaches and three pints of tomatoes and whatever. One, the girls took home to use there, and one we put on the shelf to save for any other time, and the other we used for meals. My girls planned meals and made out the list of what they were going to need and went shopping for the food and invited guests and served the meals at school.

So you helped them become wonderful wives and mothers.

We did that for a long time. Of course that took up a lot of time.

Describe what Battle Mountain was like then. Was this a period of activity with the mines? Or was it a quiet time? This was in the 1930s?

Uh-huh. Of course, when I was teaching, I had little dealing with anything to do with the mines.

That's right, of course. Except, did the number of children fluctuate with people coming in and out? Did you get a lot of new kids and lose a lot of kids?

No, I don't think so. I had five Negro children, and that's the first Negroes I'd ever seen.

Five?! From one family?

One family. They were nice children, but they were odd to me because I had never seen any before.

What was the family doing here?

He was a railroad man. And the railroad tried to fire him when he was almost ready to retire, and the whole town signed for him and got him reinstated, and I remember that.

Now the train went through here, right?

The train was a major part of life in those days. Nowadays, it's nothing—we never know whether it comes or goes, or care. But of course there were, as I say, several hundred—maybe there wasn't—but at least a good many Mexicans worked on the train. I guess there were white people too, but most of them were Mexican people, that worked on the tracks. And they had a regular community down there beside the track.

Was the depot here in town?

Beautiful depot. I think it was about maybe three years ago that I woke up one morning and it was gone. They had bulldozed it overnight and taken it out.

Why?

It was terrible! Because the trains didn't need it any more. I think the Women In Mining tried to get it for a mining museum. And I heard—now this may not be true, I don't know—if you talk to mining people, they'll know—that the railroad said no, they wouldn't ease it to them, because the insurance on it was terrific. Now, why they

didn't want to move it, I don't know. I don't really know what happened. But anyway, we never expected it to be taken away like that.

Did you ride the train from here to Austin? I understand there was a little train from here to Austin, a slow one.

[chuckles] Let's see, that first year—I had heard of Austin, of course, for years—and I thought, "Well, I'll get on the train and ride up there." So I went over to the depot and asked them how much it was, and it was nine dollars and something a ticket, but you had to stay overnight in Austin. And I didn't know anybody in Austin, of course. Then I found that it was nine dollars and something to go to Reno, so I went to Reno that weekend. I never did go to Austin!

When did you meet your husband, the man you were going to marry? Was it soon after you arrived?

No, he was living in Carlin then. He was working on the railroad in Carlin. I guess in the spring of 1926.

Was that like after the spring you arrived?

Well, let's see now: I came in the fall of 1925. That would be in the spring of 1927, then, because I didn't know him for a year after [I came to Battle Mountain].

Did you get to know the family, the rest of the Lemaire's, before you met him?

Yes. In my last year here, in my third year here, I lived here with them. Lots of people kept boarders, so I lived with her.

In other words, you left Dusang's and moved to the Lemaire house?

No, let me think. The second year when I came back, I kept house for two little orphan girls—big orphan girls, they were going to high school. But their father was a miner, and he was one of those "going to get rich" people that moved around, you know. So I kept house for them in a little house up there.

What was their last name?

Lakin. And I had never heard of them since they left here, until about, I guess it's almost a year ago, one of the girls sent the museum ten dollars.

Really?! In your name?

Uh-huh.

And did you get your room and board free by doing that?

Their father was always going to pay me for the fuel and the electricity and all that, but he never did have the money. So I really kept the girls that year.

Oh, that was kind. Did you have other beaux before you met your future husband? You must have! Or were you still suspicious of men?

[chuckles] There were some boys that graduated before I came here, but they were just a couple of years younger than I was. They had a stripped-down Ford, and I used to chase around the country with them. But they were both mechanics, and they used to talk mechanics on each side of me while I did my school[work], listening to them. I wasn't

listening to them, but anyway...They really weren't "beaus," as far as that's concerned.

Did you have time for a social life? I know your school kept you so busy, and was also most of your social life. Did you have an outside social life as a young person? Did you go to dances?

Yes, they had jitney dances here.

What's that? A lot of people won't know it, so tell us.

I don't know whether that's the official name of them—that's what we called them. Anyway, you went to the door and bought a line of tickets, say, and they were five cents a piece. And if you wanted to dance, you gave back a ticket, which was a nickel. If you didn't dance, you took them home and used them next time.

Where was the dance?

In Shovelin's Hall. Now, there is no Shovelin's Hall any more. That's been torn down. But it was a movie theater. Of course in that day and age, the movies were silent. I remember the first time I went to the movie theater here—the children told me I had to take a pillow, because I would be sitting on the floor. And of course I didn't bite to that—I said, "Well, I'd just come on." But anyway there were all kinds of chairs in there: kitchen chairs, folding chairs, any old thing to sit on. And it was a big screen up front. You walked in the back, and the first thing you saw was the piano player—the woman playing the piano up front there. And she looked like she just came off of Fifth Avenue.

Really?!

She was in an evening gown and pearls—jet black hair. She was beautiful.

Do you know who what was?

Yes, she was Helen Lemaire.

Oh! [laughter]

But the part that was so astonishing was the fact that there was nothing else there. It was all old and worn and uncared for, you might say. But she was good. You know how the background is nowadays at the movies. It's supposed to show the theme of the movie, but they do a bad job. But she did—you always knew when it was thundering and lightening and what it was going to do on the stage, because she was really clever. She was certainly dolled-up that time.

So then tell me when you first met your husband-to-be.

Gosh, I don't know, I suppose it was one of the dances.

Then obviously it wasn't a "oh gosh, there he is" kind of thing?

No.

How did that friendship develop?

I don't know. Of course, I was living here, and he used to come back and forth to home, so I knew him that well.

When did it turn into a romance? When did he take you home and say "this is my girl"?

[laughs] Gosh, I don't know—sometime in the last year I was here.

So it was gradual?

Yes.

Where did you marry?

Near my home in Smith Valley at a little church. The community was called Smith, and I don't think there is such a place any more. There was just a church and families there.

Did all of his family go there?

No, they just came down at night, and we were married the next day at sunrise on the lawn.

So it was just a very quiet wedding?

Yes, just my family.

Was there a reason for that?

Well, I had taught in Washington for a year.

The State of Washington?

Yes.

Okay, we'll have to backtrack. After your wedding, we'll backtrack a little bit.

We were married on August 24, and of course I had to be up there around September 1.

What year was that you married?

In 1929.

Let's back up. You said you went to Washington to teach. You left Battle Mountain. Why did you do that?

The last year I was here, Prof. Holland, who was really a wonderful man, insisted that I should go teach in the northwest. He knew the country up there, and he gave me names of towns that he looked up that he had known about.

Why did he want you to do that?

Just so I would grow, I guess.

So he was interested in your development?

Uh-huh.

How could they replace you here? How could they find a teacher?

The girl that married Charles Lemaire came and followed me: my cousin's cousin.

Oh, here in Battle Mountain?

Yes. She came from North Dakota.

Did you know her?

No, I didn't know her. She came while I was gone.

When you got the job in Washington, did you go up there first? or was it through the mail? How did you get that job?

I sent my resume to various places up there. I finally decided to go to Kalama because it was on the Columbia River.

Did you like it?

Loved it.

Wasn't that kind of adventuresome for a woman in those days to do that?

I guess it was. Let's see, Kalama had been an old lumbering town, but the lumber business had gone down mostly. There was a place where you catch fish and freeze them. What do you call it?

A cannery?

A cannery—only they didn't can fish. The only stuff that they canned was the awful that was left, to feed the new fish at a fish hatchery out in the country.

Did you teach the same subjects?

No. Home economics started in the fifth grade there, so I really taught grammar school home ec. up there.

Did your husband-to-be follow you there, or court you there?

No, no. That year, of course it was in the big trees. The only sky you ever saw was if you looked straight up. Then you'd see the red sky off [in the distance] and you'd think it was the sunset, and it was fire. There were always fires.

Where did you live when you taught there?

The first year I lived in a mansion. The man who had made a fortune lumbering in that country had built it years before, and this woman that lived there then took boarders.

You'd have to see Kalama to know what it was like. The main street of Kalama was the highway that went from Portland to Seattle. The town was built up in the mountains from that. If you lived on the highway, you could run your car all winter—but if you didn't, you put it in a garage on the highway and left it until spring, because the snow and the ice were so deep.

How did you manage there?

The boys that went to school there never intended to finish high school, so that you had boys going to school that were twenty-five years old and they were still in high school—not because they were dumb, but because they wanted someplace to go. So one day the door opened and somebody yelled, "The salmon are running!" and you lost your children. [laughter] They left and they went out on their salmon boats. But to get to the school, which was higher, even, than where I lived—it was up on the hill, the big boys would wear cocked boots, and they would serpentine up the hill from the highway, with, say, twenty-five children, with the little people on the end of it, and the big boys, and they would serpentine this way to get up the mountain on a street. And if you went on a sidewalk, the sidewalks were all cleated, so that you could go and didn't slip. I don't know that I ever tried to walk up there in the wintertime.

What did you do?

I just waited for the youngsters and went with them up the hill.

Oh, you went up with them! Now, I want to get back: When you went to Washington, were you already close friends with your husband-to-be?

Oh yes, we were engaged when I left here.

Alright, so let's go back to your engagement. Before you went to Washington, he proposed and you said yes?

I guess.

Well, he wasn't even living in Battle Mountain, so it wasn't like you left him.

No.

Did he visit you in Washington?

No, he never came up there. Anyway, I fell in love with the country up there, because it was so entirely different than here—as well as I liked here, too, as far as that goes. I thought, “Well, now, if we got married and I came back up here to teach, Louie could enjoy this wonderful, different world.” And he was crazy about the outdoors and fishing and all that stuff. So we were married that summer, in August, and we took a whole camp outfit, and we camped on the way up there. I don't know how many days it took us. But anyway, I have my notebook in which I kept the cost of it. For \$18.35 we spent the five days that were our honeymoon.

Now, let me get back a little bit. Was it unusual then to—because now it's pretty common—but wasn't it unusual then for a wife to have the job and the husband to follow the wife? You were way ahead of your time. Wasn't that an unusual couple?

Well, when we got married and he went up there, he worked for the telephone company, so he worked and I worked.

But wasn't it unusual for a man to say, “Yes, Honey, I'll go where you're working.”

I don't know, I never thought about it. I guess it was.

Did you go to his family after the wedding?

No, we just went straight from Smith, on the highway up to Washington.

And how long did you both stay there? How long did you teach there after you were married?

Just one year. At the end of a year, he got homesick, or his folks did [missed him] or something. He wanted to come back down here. Anyway, at the end of the year we started home by going through Washington and out that way. We came to a resort: Top of the Hill Tavern, it was called. They had an advertisement: they wanted a service station manager and storekeeper. So we decided we'd stop there and work for the summer, which we did.

Oh, aren't you both something! I want to go back to the Lemaire family a little bit. How many brothers did your husband have?

My husband Louie's father had three brothers and a sister. Then in Louie's family, there was just Louie and his sister.

Which one was his father?

Louis A.

Okay, so we have three Louis Louis A., your husband, and your son?

We have five. My son has a Louie.

So his father was the one who was running the store?

Yes.

It was his father. So you spent the summer working at that gas station and store. And then what happened after the summer?

We came back down here and we never went back up there.

Did your husband work in the Lemaire Store?

He worked there off and on, but we wanted to run the store, because Uncle Louie—I called him Uncle Louie—when I came here, the first time I went in the store a little Indian boy came in and he said “Uncle Louie, my mother wants something or other,” and I looked at the child and I looked at the man, and I thought, “Well, that’s a combination for you.” [laughter] Come to find out, everybody called them “Uncle Louie and Aunt Kate.” So we all called him Uncle Louie. When I speak of Uncle Louie, people think that it was sort of an inbred family: there’s my uncle and my husband’s father too!

Now let’s go back a little bit: Did you know the first Louie, your husband’s grandfather?

No, he died before I came here.

So you didn’t know that earlier family. What did the town look like? Did it change any during the couple of years you were away? Or was it the same when you came back to Battle Mountain after Kalama, Washington?

Well the thing I remember that had changed the most: I had left a lot of the things that I used for plays and whatever at school, and somebody had thrown them all out.

Oh no! Did you go back to teaching?

Well, in the school there was that change. And then when I taught school here, they had

a beautifully furnished chemistry and physics laboratory. And we locked our equipment in the storeroom so nobody could touch it. When I came back, it was broken. It was just wrecked, and it just made me sick. Our wind machine was wrecked. The whole business was wrecked.

Where did you live when you both came back? Where did you make your home?

We lived with his folks in this house for a while.

This was his father’s home?

Yes. And then we moved over into a house where my son lives now.

Oh yes. What about the town? Did the town change?

Well, when I came here, the highway—which is the present Front Street—was a gravel road. And all the streets in town were gravel roads. They didn’t pave any of the roads for years after that, and I forget which year it was.

Is that right? Oh my. Were there any new stores on Front Street, or any ones that closed? Did it change at all?

You mean while I was gone?

Yes, just in that period of the two years you were gone.

Lemaires’ Store, of course, was there—just as it always had been. No, I don’t think it was. There was a saloon on the corner where the Owl Motel is now—that was a saloon. Then there was a post office and a bank, and

a butcher shop, and the Nevada Hotel, and another saloon. Oh, there was a drug store there. The drug store was there when I left, and it was still there when I came back.

When you came back, what did your husband do?

Well, we did everything. [chuckles] He mined and he carpentered and for thirteen years he worked for the power company. In that day and age, the power did not come in here—they generated their own power. When I first came to town, you couldn't iron in the evenings.

They shut off the electricity?

Well, no, but they needed the electricity for lights. But if you wanted to iron, you ironed in the morning.

So they sent word around, what you could or couldn't do?

Yes. Then he moved one of the big machines—the gold dredge—from one of the big mines south of here. They had three. He and various different people worked there. But he worked most of the time on the night shift.

Really?! That made it hard for your life together, didn't it?

Well, I guess. Anyway, he was supposed to come home at one o'clock in the morning, and if he didn't come, I used to walk down to see why not. And he'd have one of these engines torn apiece and laying on the floor.

Oh my! When was your first child born?

Oh, let's see, a year later, I guess.

And were you substitute teaching before you had your first child?

I don't remember, whether I substituted that year or not. I don't think I did.

How did you feel coming back to Battle Mountain when you loved Washington so much? Did it look kind of barren?

I never thought of Battle Mountain as barren—or any other place, for that matter, because they all have something.

Oh, good—so you have a positive viewpoint.

People used to come here and say there was nothing here. One woman came in the store and said, "There's *nothing* in this place! Nothing on the highway," and whatever. And I said, "Well what do you think would be something?" And she said, "Houses and people and trees!" And I said, "Did you have those back East?" She said, "Yes we have, you bet we have!" And I said, "Why did you come out here then?"

Good for you!

She never answered me. I said, "If you wanted just what you had at home, why not stay home? There's no point in leaving."

What was your life like before you had your child that year back, when you weren't teaching full-time and you were married? What was your life like?

I don't remember.

What were some of your activities or friends?

I think I helped Uncle Louie in the store a lot of that time. And then Aunt Kate, my

husband's mother, kept teachers here, so I just helped with them.

Tell me a little bit about his mother and father. First start with his mother: tell me a little bit about his mother.

Oh boy! Kate was what you might call "quite a woman," I guess. When I knew her, she was not an invalid, but she wasn't able to do very much. His mother and father were great lodge people. Of course you knew that the Lemaire's Store had a lodge hall over it, and they had about twelve different lodges here. They used to go to lodge all the time. And of course we joined the Masons—Louie was already a Mason and I joined the Eastern Star.

Now what family was Kate from? Was she a Battle Mountain girl?

Oh yes, in a way.

What was her family name?

Her name was Heflin. Her mother—I think there were three children: two boys and Kate—came from the East to Austin, Nevada, where her husband was—I think he chopped wood for the mills. I don't know what else he did. Anyway, when she came here, the Austin railroad was only built half-way, so he came and met her out on the prairie someplace out here—so we know just the date she came. Then she taught school in Louis, Nevada—which isn't there any more.

Oh, so she was a teacher too?

Yes, at what we call Betty O'Neal Mine now. But that was Louis for years, and they named the canyon, they named the town, they

named the whole thing. But she had a lot of children up there. So Uncle Louie of course was here helping his father in the store. They had a romance. It's quite interesting to read about. Then after they were married, he went all over the country to lodge doings. We have the things from Canada and I don't know where else. He was a great lodge person. I don't think he liked the store keeping, really, as far as store keeping is concerned. But he liked the fellowship. In those days, you were friends with your customers—they didn't just come in, buy their groceries, and leave.

A place to visit with everyone?

He loved to talk. And of course everybody stopped there, going and coming, and he'd talk to them. And he was very interested in the outdoors—he collected arrowheads.

Is that the collection up on your walls?

Those are some of his and some that we got. In the days it was possible, arrowhead hunting was our Sunday excursion. We took the children and went all over the country, hunting arrowheads, and that was interesting. Then of course in that day and age, you went fishing and caught all kinds of trout on the Humboldt River.

Grace Rose was telling me about what a musical family that your father-in-law and family enjoyed.

Oh yes.

Did they perform when you were married? Did they have musical evenings? Or was that over by then?

They didn't have very many. Some of them used to go to different houses and sing. But my

husband and his cousins were in an orchestra, and they played for all the dances.

Really?!

That was the best dance music that I've ever heard! and anybody else has ever heard, because. Music in those days had melody to it and a beat to it, and you could understand it. But nowadays, it's just a conglomeration of loud noises, as far as I'm concerned.

You're right! Did he continue with that performing of dance music after you were married? Or was this all before you married?

No, they continued with their orchestra for years.

Did you go?

Sure I went to the dances.

Alright, then you had your first child. Where did you have your first child?

We had a hospital. There were three rooms.

Here in Battle Mountain?

In Battle Mountain. There was a doctor, a nurse, and a Negro girl who did the chores, more or less. You brought the water in, and you brought the coal and wood in. You had a coal stove. I think the water set on a bench.

There was no plumbing then?

There was no plumbing.

No plumbing anywhere?

No plumbing anywhere. In the thirties, I think, they put plumbing in there, because we had an outside toilet for years over there.

Oh my! Did you have a good doctor?

He was one of the best doctors I think that ever was.

Who was that?

Dr. Clark.

Oh yes, I've heard people talk about him.

So we had to bring in the coal, and the Negro girl took out the bedpan and whatever outside. But I was in the hospital overnight at that time.

How long did you have to stay in the hospital when you had a baby then?

Ten days. Wasn't that ridiculous?! I was so well and so ready to do something. I was bored to death! And they wouldn't let me even read a book, because they said it would bother my milk for her—and of course I didn't have any.

Which one was your first child?

Jeanne, a girl. There was another lady in there with a baby at the same time, and she had lots of milk, so she fed my daughter. Anyway, I never did find anything that agreed with Jeanne for a couple of years.

And then when did you have your son? How many years after your daughter?

Two years, I think. Well, I think there's only eighteen months' difference—he was

born in the summer. I never went near a doctor until the water broke, and then that's the first time we went.

No prenatal care?

Nobody thought about it! Now, of course Dr. Clark knew that I was alright, I guess, because I used to see him every morning. He lived right there in that place. But anyway, with the second one, I phoned him one morning and told him the water broke, and he said, "Well go to the hospital and Mrs. Frame will get you ready." So I went up there, and she did whatever was supposed to be done. And I was still there when he came just before noon. He came up and he said, "How close are your pains?" and I said, "I haven't had one yet." And he said, "Well then why don't you go home." And Mrs. Frame said, "No, she's not going to go home, I've seen too many second babies..." So I was helping her with the trays for lunch, and I had a full tray in my hand, and I had one big pain and I threw the tray on the bed. I screamed, and he screamed at her, and she screamed at him! Anyway, my baby was born right then.

You're kidding!

That's all there was too it. If I'd have come home, I'd have had him in the middle of the street! [laughter]

Now in those days, if your children had accidents or were sick, was there good care for them?

Yes. I often think now when people go to the doctor for this and the doctor for that—we didn't do that. If your child got hurt, why, you just went and washed the thing off, put some iodine on it and bandaged it up. But

nowadays, they chase to the doctor whenever he cuts anything.

Did they go through the normal diseases like chicken pox, scarlet fever, measles?

My children had measles, I remember. One summer we had a camp on the river. Did Grace [Rose] tell you about the camp on the river?

Well, I want to hear it from you, because hers was a different experience. And your son told me a little, but I want to hear it from you.

We took everything down there: we had a cookstove, we had a fly over the cook place and the dining room. Do you know what a fly is? A big canvas.

You showed me a picture of that, yes.

And then we had two other tents besides that: a dressing tent for the men and a dressing tent for the women. We had five tents down there for some reason or another. Oh, we had to sleep in one, didn't we! [laughter]

Now, I want to go back. Tell me, first of all, how many families went down to the river to camp for the summer? It sounds like such a wonderful experience. Was it an every summer kind of thing for certain families?

Before I came here—well, even afterwards—the Altenburg family—that's Grace's family—had camped up the Humboldt River. Well then ours, of course, was down here at what we call "the pocket." At the pocket we built a wharf and he built a boat, which I have part of it. And so we had boating. The children could go up and down the river if they wanted to.

Was this just public lands anyone could camp on? Or what was it?

I guess. Maybe he asked permission to stay there, I don't know.

So your family was the core, the main family?

Part of the old Blossom Ranch, yes. You could catch catfish off the wharf or along the banks. Half the town learned to fish over there. On Sundays maybe twenty or thirty people would come down. They'd bring potluck, bring a lot of stuff, and picnic.

How many families like your family camped there for the summer?

There was only us. And then later on, the next year, I think, Charles—that's his cousin—built a camp down below ours. There was the wharf and the fishing and the boating. And then down, just—well, part of the camp, I guess—the river made a turn, and there was a sandbar down there, which we used for our evenings—you built a bonfire on the sandbar and sang and whatever.

[wistfully] Oh, can I come?

In this curve, there was swimming. And on that side of the river was a big mud slide. It was a regular recreation center, where there was not any money expended, whatever. Nobody worried about people getting sick from the dirty water. There was no regulation that you had to quit or that you couldn't do, or whatever.

What did you do for toilets?

We just fixed a frame with a sack around it.

And what did you cook on?

I cooked mostly on the cook stove, because we took a cook stove down there.

What did you use for the fuel for the cookstove?

Sagebrush and willow and any old piece that was around. There were lots of willows there and dead willows.

What did the cookstove look like? An open pit?

No, no. You've seen old butane cookstoves, haven't you?

I don't know.

Just like my cookstove there.

Oh, alright. And you just used wood or sagebrush?

Any wood that the children would go around and pick up pieces. There was lots of wood around on the river. In fact, during the years when we'd go fishing, I always took a box and brought home a big box of kindling from the river.

So did your husband come after work?

Uh-huh.

So you just lived there. For how long? the whole summer?

I don't know how long we were there, maybe six weeks.

That sounds fun. Did your kids have friends come and stay with you too? Were there other kids?

I guess they did, they must have stayed.

Or come to play?

We had tents for the children to sleep in.

Did you have any other women there for companionship during the week? Was there another family? Or was it just you and the kids, until your husband came?

People used to come down.

Just for the day?

To stay.

Did you swim? Were you a swimmer?

Isn't that sad, but I'm not. If my head comes up, my feet go down—that sort of swimmer. [chuckles]

So you fished?

Yeah, I'm a good fisherman.

You cooked?

I cooked and I supervised the children.

Did you take a book and read?

I don't think I read down there—it was too busy. We used to do a lot of watching wildlife, watch the ducks and the swans fly over, and listen to the coyotes and the rabbits. There were lots of things for the children to know about.

Wasn't that wonderful for the kids?

Yes, it was. There isn't anything [with emotion] any more for the children to do on

their own—it all has to be made for them: "You have to make me a race track, and you have to make me.

Uh-huh. And also, in most places away from these isolated towns that are still safe, you can't let kids do that because of the safety feature. So it's a different era.

Yeah. Nobody ever was hurt down there, that I know of.

You didn't have to worry. Kids could just...

Nobody ever molested us or anything.

I want to hear a little more about the camp, and then were going to end today's interview session, and tomorrow start a whole new phase, and we'll talk about that when I shut off the tape. Did you interact a lot with the rest of the Lemaire family at that period? with his brothers and their families? Were there big family gatherings, with the uncles and cousins?

Yes, there must have been, because we went on family picnics all the time. And we used to go on lodge picnics.

Where would the picnics be?

Most of the time, when we weren't on the river—the mosquitoes got bad certain times on the river—up to Mill Creek, by Louis Canyon. But then there were picnic tables, or you took all your stuff and sat on the logs and whatever.

I read where in an earlier period—I don't know if you were involved—there used to be a time when Austin was the center for everyone to go for Fourth of July, and that everyone came to Battle Mountain on Labor Day. Did

you participate in any of those festivities in Austin?

No, I never went to Austin until my husband and another man decided to mine up there. They were going to make their fortune. My children weren't going to school, so we went up there and stayed for a summer at Gweena. It was a mine. Of course they didn't make any fortune. They never made any fortunes at mines that I know of except the big companies—they had the big equipment.

Did your husband do any mine staking? Did he stake out land for mines?

Oh yes, for heaven's sakes. We *all* did that. Of course when I lived in Buckskin—this is a long time ago—the thing you did on New Year's was go out and jump claims, or stake out claims. The leases were over the first of January. New Year's Eve, December 31, everybody took their lanterns and went out and staked claims out. We didn't do that here, but we did own all kinds of claims. We still own a lot of claims up in the Gap up here. Let's see, it was called Duval then. We sold the Copper Queen to them, some years ago. Now they say that they've made a law that you have to pay \$200 a year to keep a claim, so we'll give up everything we have—everybody will. They're going to kill mining, by the way, in Nevada.

We're going to go to that in another session. So before I close today's session, anything else on while your children were still young? The camp was obviously a highlight of that period. Is there anything in that period, before we move on tomorrow morning, that we didn't talk about?

Well, let's see. At one of the PTA meetings, they discussed whether they would have school lunches here. The principal's wife said

no, and he said no—that it would make too much confusion, because you'd have the smell of the cooking...

Do you know what year, approximately, when that was? In the thirties?

I think it was later. We'll talk about the year in a minute. Anyway, being me, I said, "Well, if that's the only reason we aren't going to have school lunches, we're *going* to have school lunches." So the principal's wife said, "Well, the PTA will not sponsor it"—she was head of it—because it will break the PTA." And I said, "Well, I'll cook the lunches, and if they owe anything at the end, I'll pay the PTA." So anyway, I did. I took over school lunches. We started a school lunch program over in the grammar school.

Oh, how generous!

And myself and another girl who wasn't quite bright—I won't tell her name—we cooked, we served, we served as many as 105 children. At the end of the year, we had \$8.35 left over, so I gave that to the PTA.

Now, a couple of questions: What were the kind of meals you cooked? And what did the kids pay?

What did the kids pay? I really don't know, but the government paid for the Indians. They paid eight cents a piece, I think, for the Indians. We got surplus commodities from the government, for one thing. And then, as the government paid for all the Indians...I think they paid eight cents a piece for the children, and then the parents maybe paid ten cents.

Oh, that's all. Now, a couple of questions: Did you make those arrangements with the government?

The principal of the grammar school did.

Okay, next question. How many Indians were there?

Well, I don't know—maybe forty.

Did they have their separate school yet?

Not while I was here. They were integrated when I came here.

What were some of the surplus foods and what meals did you cook?

The surplus foods were like those Number 10 cans. Do you know what a Number 10 can or tin is? They didn't call them gallon cans, but they were about a gallon, I guess. We had all the different fruits, like apples and peaches and pears and prunes and all that. Then they had peas. I don't know what else.

Beans?

No, we bought our beans and cooked them, and the potatoes. It was a government project, of course. A woman came in and told us what we could serve and what we couldn't serve and whatever. And I never did it! [laughs]

Where did you cook?

We served in the auditorium, and there was a little room off the auditorium in the grammar school. There was a stove in there, because they used to serve desserts and things at the meetings and whatever. So we cooked on that.

Oh my! How old were your children when you started doing this?

They weren't going to school yet, and I hired a woman to take care of them.

And how long did you go on doing this?

I just did it for a year, and then they kept on the school lunches for two or three years.

Oh, that's a wonderful contribution, a wonderful story.

It was interesting, and it was fun. We only worked two or three hours a day.

But you started something that was important. You broke a pattern, right? [chuckles]

Well, I guess I was just mean, because when people say, "Well, we won't do this because it's too much work," or "it's too much bother," or we're not going to do it for this, that and the other—as far as I'm concerned you don't do things for that reason: you do them because you *should* do them, or they needed to be done or something.

Good for you! Well, we're going to end this morning's interview. And tomorrow morning at 9:30 a.m., we'll continue. Thank you so much.

Second interview session with Eleanor Lemaire at her home, June 15, 1993.

Good morning, Eleanor. This is our second session, and we didn't talk at all yesterday about mining. What can you tell me about your personal experience?

Well, I think the first actual mine I went to live at, was at Gweena, which is a mine out of Austin. My husband and Don Sumin were mining there. And we lived all summer in an

old shack. The thing I remember most is pack rats—isn't that a silly thing to remember?! But anyway, they didn't make very much money, so they only mined there that one year.

What did the pack rats do? I don't now pack rats, and neither will others.

A pack rat is a rat that is very large. It comes and takes everything it wants that you have, and brings you back something. It never takes anything without bringing something back.

Oh for goodness sakes! Like what?

So you'd get up in the morning and your food was probably gone, if any of it was out. And they'd take that. Or they might take your socks or anything they thought they could use. And then they would bring you back sticks. So you would have a whole pile of sticks, leaves, or something like that—so you knew what happened to your things that were lost.

Oh, I'd never heard of them. Do you have any pictures of them?

No.

Just to finish Gweena, all over the surface at Gweena, you could find turquoise—just like pebbles all over, flat pieces. But it wasn't turquoise that was of any value at that time, because it was light-colored.

Did you collect any of those?

Yes, we brought a box home. And during the years...I couldn't tell you where that is.

Now what year was this, about?

In the early thirties.

How far out of Austin was this mine?

Oh, I'd say about ten miles or so.

What did Austin look like then?

[chuckles] Well, a store and a hotel and of course there were a few cars. There was a garage, probably, there. But the highway was just a dirt track. I have a picture here of our highway in 1914, and it looked the same way in 1925 when I came here.

We'll look at those pictures afterward, and then maybe copy some for the interview. Was the population then as small as it is now? It's about 350 now.

Well, it was probably smaller then, because the mining in Austin was at a downturn in the thirties.

I see. What kind of mining were you doing at that time?

It was gold that they were mining for at that time. But I think Austin's main principal mineral was silver, it was a silver mine.

Now tell me, what did you live in when you were at that mine? Did you stay for about a year?

No, just in the summer.

What did you live in?

In a cabin that was there—an old shack [chuckles], in other words.

Then your children were with you too?

Oh yes.

How many were there at that mine, when you were there for that summer?

There were just the two men working, and my family.

And that's all?

Uh-huh.

Was it enjoyable or difficult? What kind of a life did you have that summer?

I guess I don't remember any difficulties in my life. We enjoyed it, I guess.

The kids?

We went out and picked up turquoise and investigated the scenery and looked for rabbit holes and rabbits around.

They were lucky they had a mother so full of adventure, to encourage that.

Well, it was easier than trying to entertain them in the house. We were all outdoor people anyway.

What other kind of mining?

Now, the next summer, we went and did placer mining up at Poor Man's Gulch.

Where is that?

We'll talk about Vail's Gulch first, because that's where the *big* placer came from. It was incorporated into the Duval mining concern, and it's all part of the fenced area up there. And of course they call it Battle Mountain Gold now.

Oh, okay, I know where that is.

But anyway, Poor Man's Gulch was a gulch on the Copper Queen Mine, which we owned.

You owned it?

Yes. My husband and René Lemaire sold the Copper Queen to the Duval Corporation. And the Copper Queen lies between Copper Canyon and Copper Basin. And to the best of my knowledge, they've not mined it yet. But anyway, it was mainly copper ore. I have a huge piece of native copper—Bud has it someplace—that came out of there. I wish I could find it. Now a man named Vail, found the placer gold there, and the gulch was named after him. Well, he lived in the house that Louie now lives in. Anyway, he got \$40,000 at once for his placer gold that he found up there, and he put it in the stock market and lost every penny of it. So he was living in one of the Lemaire houses at the time, and he decided because he had lived there so long, he should own it. Finally, he died, and we wanted the house to live in, when Louie and I came here. So they got out, but they were very hostile. They were very angry with Louie because he wouldn't give them that house because they had lived in it, and they were broke. You know, that's what happened to so much of the people's money—they don't know what to do with it after they get it. He and his wife were alone, and they could have lived beautifully all the rest of their lives on that \$40,000 at that time. He was greedy, had to get more. When my children were about three and four, I guess, we went up to placer mine not in Vail's Gulch, but where a stream ran out of a spring, and ran down. It was called Poor Man's Gulch, which is over the hill from Vail's Gulch. But we mined there for weeks and weeks—I've forgotten how long.

Was there any luck there?

We got gold. As far as I'm concerned, that's the most interesting in the world, is placer mining.

Can you describe it, the best you can?

When placer gold comes out of the mountains, it's very heavy, so that water will run over it and also sand and the rest of the minerals. So when you go to placer mine, you have to find bedrock, where you find your gold in niches in the bedrock. So you find where water has run, and you turn the water out if you can, and take a whisk broom and your fingers and dig down in these little notches and find your gold nuggets. Now, we never found any very large ones, but we had bottles of gold that high out of there. Now that's one way of placer mining. Then another way, you have what they call a dry rocker. You put all the dirt into a wooden trough thing, and rock it until you get the heavy stuff, which was the gold, went to the bottom. And then you wash the top off.

That does sound like fun.

So we did both kinds up there, but that was very interesting.

That's a wonderful ring! [Large gold nugget ring on Eleanor Lemaire's finger.]

That's a nugget that came from Bannock. Now, miners will tell you there never was any gold nuggets in Bannock, but my husband found this on a dump. Maybe somebody lost it there, I don't know. But anyway, it was there. It weighs one ounce. There's been quite a bit of placer gold mined up there. Of course they placer mined in Vail's Gulch clear into the seventies [1970s].

Really?!

Gordon Estes was the last one I remember that had a lease up there. Uncle Louie used to ship the gold for people at the store.

Where did they ship it to?

They had to ship it to the United States mint, because it was thirty-five dollars an ounce, and you couldn't sell it for more than that. That's crazy, isn't it? But anyway, that was a government regulation. So what would be a thousand dollars now would probably be less than a hundred dollars then.

Was the government buying it from the miners?

I don't know who bought it. I know it was a government regulation that you had to live under.

You mentioned that the Lemaire's owned the copper mine?

Louie and his cousin, René, owned the Copper Queen, yes.

Can you tell me anything about that? Was that before you married?

Yes. Well, they still owned it, and they sold it in the 1960s.

Is there anything you can tell me about that? Did your husband go out there? Was there mining being done there?

He was a licensed mining hoist engineer—he used to work with the hoists, and so he mined there when he was younger.

Did he do any mining when you were married, besides the summers?

Oh yes, around everywhere. He mined at the Betty O'Neal, and he mined at the Copper Queen, and he mined...Oh, everyplace.

You gave me some typewritten history pages that I read this morning. I noted that your husband would go with his father and they discovered Indian caves in Lander County?

Yes.

Can you tell me anything about that?

I never got to go there. They always told me, "There they were." But up in Mill Creek.

Did you ever visit them?

I've never been there. The only Indian cave I ever heard of, and it wasn't really a cave, was on the way to the Gap out here, just a few miles from Battle Mountain. My sister-in-law and I were out there walking one day, and we saw this niche where they had put an Indian baby, and the skeleton was there. They just put it—it wasn't really a cave, just a niche in the rock. That's the only one I ever saw.

Well let's go back to the mining. Is there anything more?

It must have been in the thirties and the forties that they mined mercury. They used to bring the whole—you know, mercury is mined and put into cylinders, and the cylinders weigh about a hundred pounds or five hundred pounds, or something—they're very heavy. Nobody ever lifted them—you just ran a cart under them and bumped them in.

But they used to store them in the store, in our vault.

Why?

Until they got enough to make a shipment.

Oh, you had that big a vault?

Uh-huh, it was a walk-in vault.

Was it yours? Or they rented the space? I'm a little confused.

[laughs] I think probably Uncle Louie just gave them the space. I don't think anybody ever paid him for anything.

I see, he was just a generous man to his community.

Yeah, he did for everybody. He was a notary public.

Now that mercury: was it shipped all over the country?

I don't know where they shipped it. And I couldn't even tell you the name of the mining people that mined it. But there must be other people in this community that knew what it was.

No one's mentioned it yet. So there was lots of kinds of mining here: because I know there was the barite.

Yes. Well, the barite was very late years: that was in the sixties, seventies—it must be in the seventies, I guess.

Oh, that late. Let's stay with that earlier period. What else can you tell me about the mining

that either you were involved with, or that you observed?

I was never directly involved with mining very much, except what I've mentioned—except that I “grubstaked”—I suppose that's the right word—for many people who *were* mining, and they forgot to pay me.

Now tell me again, what was that word?

When you gave people things they couldn't pay for in those days, it was called “grubstaking” them. In other words, they came and bought their grub from you, and you staked them to it, just like you stake people to gambling money or whatever it is. Of course I don't think there would have been much living, really, in the West, if it weren't for the small storekeeper: for the people made their money and spent it anywhere, but for their food. They would be broke, and they would come to the storekeeper for enough to grubstake them for the next time. I remember one group—and this was in the sixties, I guess—these young men came to the store and asked me for money for this mining deal, and they took their minerals to Salt Lake to sell them. There was nobody in the West that could run the type of ore that they got here, so it had to go to Salt Lake. They told me they would pay me when they came back. Well, there were some people downtown who saw them downtown, and they saw them cash their check at the bank, and they came and told me that those men were on their way down to the redlight house—so they weren't going to pay me, they were going down there. I said, “Alright, I'll go down to the redlight house.” So I didn't have to go in, somebody saw me coming and went in and told them. And so they came out and paid me my money, which was two or three hundred dollars.

In other words, you had loaned them money, not only for food?

No, it was for food while they were mining.

I see, food and supplies.

Supplies, uh-huh.

Now, since you mentioned the redlight—which I haven't asked anyone, because I forget Nevada's laws—tell me about that. Especially when the miners were here, was there always a redlight district or house or place for prostitution?

Sometimes there were two and sometimes there was only one. Sometimes two different people owned them. At that time, the sheriff here owned the redlight house. The women that lived there were not allowed uptown. That is, in later years, one of the madams joined the businesswomen—that was the year I quit.

Would it be local women in the redlight house, or people that would come here?

No, they were all strangers, as far as I was concerned. I remember one day a very nice girl came in the store and asked me where a certain number was in town. And I didn't even know what she was talking about. So I said, “Well, that would be across the tracks, but I don't know anybody over there.” And she said, “Well, it's the redlight district that I'm looking for.” I said, “Are you going to work there?!” She was such a nice-looking girl. She said, “Yes, I am. I've worked for a long time.”

Is there a redlight house still in existence in Battle Mountain?

Oh yes! The [Chuck] Barrens lived there. He was the editor when they stopped the other day. [*The Reese River Reveille* newspaper stopped publishing.]

Oh, so it is still in existence. Now we'll go back to mining. Is there anything else about the mining? I don't want to leave it until we're sure we've covered all of that, because that's so important in this region.

There never was any mining, but when we were over walking around between here and Midas, all of the little gullies that the water comes down, you looked for whatever you can find. And there's one of those places that we found tin and a nugget farm—pieces around as big as the end of your finger. I have some of that someplace. But that's the only tin I ever heard of in this country, and of course it wasn't mineable—there was no place... Unless some day, somebody may go out there and find a tin mine, I don't know.

So the mines have come and gone in this region?

Yes. One of the reasons is that the minerals were not worth what they are today. And a lot of the ground could not be worked with the machinery they had in that day and age. Nowadays they have methods of getting gold, silver, and all kinds of things out of ore.

Let's go back now—we don't want to come up to the current yet. Let's stay in the thirties for a while. I think there were some things that we didn't talk about yesterday in that early period that you might want to tell me about.

Well, let's see, the thirties were the Depression years, weren't they?

Yes, and we didn't get into the Depression.

Well, we were married in 1929, which was the beginning of the Depression. During the Depression years we didn't go hungry, because we had a large garden and raised everything we could raise, and we went fishing down at the river, caught lots of catfish which I like. We always went deer hunting, so we had venison all year.

Oh! Now where did you hunt for deer?

Well, in this country, you can just go out of town in any of the hills. Mill Creek—that's a good place.

Are there restrictions, or hunting licenses?

There's hunting licenses, yes. But nowadays, you get a license for a certain district, but in those days, you could hunt here one day and Elko County the next day—it didn't make any difference.

Did you ever shoot a deer?

No, but I shot at them I [laughter] I never hit one. The last deer that I remember having anything to do with, as far as hunting was concerned: my husband shot a deer up on the north fork of Mill Creek, and he cut it in two, back of the ribs. And he took the front part, and I took the hind-quarters on my back.

Oh my gosh!

It's very simple: You just put them across your back, and the legs in front; cut the tendons by the feet; and run your rifle [through there]; and you hold onto the rifle, and you don't know you have anything.

Do you have a picture of that?

[chuckles] No, nobody took pictures in those days. So anyway, I went clear down the canyon, almost to the car, and he wasn't coming and wasn't coming. So I backed up against a boulder there and waited for him for a long time until he got down. But anyway, he'd had trouble with the horns. So of course he had the big part, the awkward part. I had the good meat, but he had the awkward part. It snowed before we got home that day, I remember. But my children and I, the four of us, used to go. We took them on a lot of deer hunting trips. We went over the mountains—I think it's Iron Canyon, it's called. That's the other side of Mill Creek. It's Horse Canyon or Iron Canyon, one of them. Anyway, we were up on the top of the mountains there, and Louie shot a deer. At that time, I only tried to carry a quarter—and of course two quarters would have been much easier, but I didn't know that! The children were with me, and I thought I was down to Mill Creek where the car was, but I got here and I looked over, and the creek was way down below me. I was on top of a bluff up there, and I sat down and cried! [laughs]

Oh, I don't blame you!

It frightened my children to death. They didn't know what was the matter. Anyway, I remember that. We never wasted any deer.

Did you help get it ready too?

Oh yes, I loved to skin deer. And I can do a better job than a lot of men, because they leave a lot of meat on the skin, and I didn't. We always made a lot of jerky, which I never ate, but my whole family is crazy about jerky. We hung it in the basement until it dried. It almost got dry, until they came and ate it.

What did you do with the skins?

Gave them to the Indians. Well, I have two skins upstairs that were finished. I could show them to you.

Yes, I'd like to take a picture of that.

We had a small deep-freeze. I took the meat off of the bones, like steaks, and I ground a lot of it up to hamburger and put a lot of onions with it, and packed it in one-quart milk cartons.

Oh, what a good idea!

And they tell you that you can't put onions in meat and keep it, but you could—it was wonderful hamburger. It was the best hamburger. But we put what we could get of four deer in there. Then I used to cook the bones and use the broth. You skimmed all the fat off of it, because it was rancid. We did our entertaining during deer season, and we had big dinners—maybe ten, twenty people. Instead of a cocktail or a drink beforehand, you'd take a cup of that broth that I canned in the fall, and a cup of tomato juice and put them together, and they make a wonderful drink.

Did you create that yourself? Or had you heard about it?

I don't think I ever heard about it, I just had the stuff, so I used it, that's all, because I canned my own tomatoes of course.

Oh my, you were a busy woman! During the Depression, how did it affect the town of Battle Mountain?

I really don't know. I'm sure nobody went hungry here. Now, I don't remember any organization that fed the people.

Did anyone lose their house, that couldn't pay the mortgage?

I don't think so. People didn't buy houses like they do now, and just pay for them for thirty years. You lived in a very small house, and you owned it. I think the majority of people who owned property at all were the type of people that didn't go into debt for their homes. Nowadays, of course, everybody goes into debt.

Well they're so expensive in places.

We didn't believe in it. Everybody abhorred debt in those days—it was worse than anything.

Anything else about those Depression years before the war started?

Well, one other thing that we did was, catch beaver on the river.

Oh, tell me about that.

Louie had built a boat, and so all four of us, and sometimes his mother and father, went with him to the river and he set traps in the water, and fixed them so that when a beaver was caught, they would drown immediately. So it wasn't like a trap that was set and the animal struggled until he went back. But we brought them home and he sharpened the knives and I skinned them, because I liked to skin them. But I can skin a good-sized beaver in fifteen minutes.

Oh my gosh! Now where did you sell the beaver skins?

We sold them to furrier companies.

Where were these furrier companies?

Oh gosh, I think the one we used most was in Oregon. I have found, when I was going through things—and I may have thrown away the bills—where they would tell you what happened. Anyway, they'd charge you so much for doing it, and then paid you the difference between what the skin was worth, or sent the skin back to you. I've got thirty-five of those beaver hides in the basement

Really?! Now, about how much would you get?

Not more than eight or nine dollars. In later years, they were worth thirty to fifty.

Were you the only ones doing that around here?

That I know of, yes. What you do with the beaver hide, after you take it off the beaver, is to tack it on a wall so it can't shrink or change shape or anything. Then you take all the fat you've left on it—and I tried not to leave any on it—and left them there until they dried. And then you roll it.

And did you learn all that yourself?

Well, Louie knew how to do it, I guess, because he knew so many things, and he did so many different things. He trapped for years. He used to trap coyotes.

Oh my! Well, he's lucky he found a woman like you.

It was interesting to do.

...who would share those endeavors.

I sold some of his traps the other day. I didn't think I'd ever be able to sell them, but I think I have about two hundred traps that he had.

Oh my, that's fascinating! Now, what else did you want to tell me about that period before World War II?

The city dump was where they call Gold Creek now, the residential district out there, that's in Battle Mountain—that was out of town. The principal of the high school, Mr. Hollan, raised silver foxes out there. He used to go out rabbit hunting at night, and then fed them rabbits.

Do you know what time period that was?

I was teaching here. It was in 1925-26-27.

How long did he have that?

I don't know. He had it before that, but he left town when I did, so he left town in 1927.

Oh, when you left for Washington, he left?

Uh-huh, he left and went to Eureka to teach.

Oh, I see.

I think for some reason or other the silver fox market went down before he quit here, as I remember.

Did you ever go out and see them?

Oh yes. We were very good friends of the principal and his wife, Louie and I. Of course the children were all interested in seeing the foxes.

About how many did he have?

I don't think they had more than a dozen at any one time.

Did he breed them? Is that how he got more?

Yes.

That's interesting. Are there any photographs of that?

I don't have any. His family might, but he's passed away long years ago.

That would be interesting.

Another thing I didn't tell you about my schoolteaching years here, what we did: There were a great many sheep raised around here, and they brought the wool into town. They sheared the sheep down by the river—there were shearing sheds down there. And so on Saturday, we all went down to watch them shear.

Even if it wasn't a school day, you did school activities?

Oh yes, we did something every weekend—we had to. Anyhow, the boys used to tamp the wool—stand in it and tamp it down in the wool sacks. Did you ever see a sack of wool?

No.

The sack stands about five or six feet high when you get through with it—it weighs several hundred pounds, I guess.

Oh my gosh!

They were huge, big sacks. But of course the wool was full of ticks, so the children had to come home at night and get the ticks off. I never got any on me.

[laughs] If you looked at a picture, you'd never know that!

But the wool was always full of ticks. If they stuck on you, you took them out various ways: you can light a match and hold it near the tick, and then it will back out. Or you put something on it like alcohol or something, and it'll back out. If they're in a long ways, you have to take pinchers and take them out.

Was some of that the Jenkins' sheep?

Yes.

I read that most of the high school boys at one time were hired by the Jenkins to work a summer, shepherding. Did any of your students work for Jenkins in the summer?

No, not at that time. They hired Basque people. But all that I remember the children ever doing was to go down and watch them shear or come back and tamp the sacks.

What a nice education. And what else in that early period?

As I said before, the trains were an important part of our living here. During those early years, they always stopped here and left off the express and the mail. If you wanted to mail a letter and you forgot, you just ran over to the train when it stopped, and handed it to the man in the mail car—they never went to the post office. Of course we knew the conductors, and we knew the train people, and the boy that was mailman on the train in those later years was a youngster that went to school with me, Raymond Merrill. But then your express was never delivered: Uncle Louie ran a little cart, which we still have—a

two-wheeled affair—over and got the bread, I remember, and things that came on the train.

Oh, in other words, your supplies came on the train for the store?

Uh-huh.

It all came on the train?

It all came on the train.

Where did it come from? Where did you get the supplies?

Either from Salt Lake or Reno. Some things you bought in Salt Lake, some things you bought in Reno. If you bought something in Salt Lake, they'd send it to Reno and send it back here. I remember this little Mexican girl who lived in a boxcar on the Track—her husband worked here, worked on the train.

A boxcar that was stationary, or rode with the train?

Well, it was only stationary while they were here, and then when their crew moved, they just took the car with them. So instead of having to clean up house every time, they just moved with the train. But this young girl came to the store for some groceries one day: she walked up, I think it was a mile at least, on the track, and she had a little baby in her arms—a little tiny thing. We said, "Well, how are you going to get home with the groceries and the baby?" So finally we put the groceries in the bottom of the sack and the baby on top. I never forgot that, how happy she was to have it all together so that she could get home. Then in later years, there was a conductor on the track who liked Wonder Bread, and he

couldn't buy it wherever he lived. So he came over one day when the train was stopped for water or something, and bought three loaves of bread. He did that several times, so I got so I knew him. Then one day I remember the train stopped and he whistled, and I ran over and gave him his three loaves of Wonder Bread. I don't know where he lived—somewhere where he couldn't buy Wonder Bread, anyway.

Oh my! Now, when the supplies came on the train then your husband would take the wagon to the train? He knew when it would be arriving?

Two-wheeled cart. Yeah, you knew what hours the train came.

Were they pretty accurate in time?

Oh, they must have been. If they didn't [come when expected] you'd just sit and talk to somebody.

You'd just wait! Life was calmer.

In later years, the train owners did not want people on their train. They wanted to get rid of the passengers. I know they did, they did it deliberately.

Because it wasn't financially profitable?

Well, I don't know this, but I think what happened is, the train bought this big truck system, and they decided that it was cheaper to haul freight in trucks, than it was on the train. So they made coming and going on their trains as uncomfortable as possible. I think first they did away with the dining cars, and then the porters weren't what they used to be. I remember one day Kate's sister came here, and she was going home to Napa on the

train, and I don't remember who was with me, but I know I took Aunt Mame down to the train, and the conductor didn't even put the box down for her to step on. So she climbed on the train on her knees, and she was a great big woman. And I'll never forget, getting Aunt Mamie on that train, which was way down the track—they stopped way down there. But I know for a fact that they tried to make life miserable for traveling on the train. If you went on the train, you said, "Never again!" So they finally got rid of us.

And then the depot.

And that wasn't fair, because the railroad was built with government money, really, because they were given every other section of land. And then they were supposed to carry people and whatever on the train. When they quit carrying people, I think that that should have done away with their contract—but it didn't, of course, naturally. The trains have cost our government more than anything that the Indians have.

Talking about the Indians, you told me that there was integration when you were teaching. Were the Indians students—coming from a segregated school—were they up to the same standard of the education of the non-Indians when you started teaching?

You know, I think that it was sort of the same idea as integrating the Negroes with the white children, in this way: The white children had a very different background. Now, I don't know that the Indians or the Negroes were any dumber than the white children, but they didn't have the background knowledge.

In their homes?

In their homes. So they came to school blank. So naturally they couldn't keep up with the children that were there, because those children had all the advantages. And I think that's the problem in the schools now, trying to integrate people.

And not just Negroes, but all the immigrants, the people coming from other cultures.

Yes. You can't expect people of entirely different backgrounds to be the same people—because heredity is the biggest part of us, but environment has a lot to do with it. So that if those youngsters ever catch up with the others, it means that they're much brighter.

Tell me from your experience in teaching—you were teaching all different children. Did you have to give them extra time, extra attention, to help them with the same subjects?

I don't remember doing that. But children helped children in those days. If you had somebody that couldn't get their work, you helped them. And that was allowed. You have a roomful of children that are talking to each other, and you know very well which ones are just talking and which ones are helping.

Yes, sure.

Very many times you get a child—not the real bright children, but the ones that you think are dumber—and yet they can help the other children, and they learn from the helping, so that it helps both ways. I think in college I learned more, really, by helping other girls, because they used to come to my room. So that you learn by teaching, by helping.

You mentioned a problem with mosquitoes. Tell us about it.

There's an overhang on this house, under those windows, and it would be just black—absolutely black. You couldn't see anything due to the mosquitoes. We lived, of course, in that little house over there. It was a little house then. And my youngsters would get so tired of being in the house, and I would get so tired of them, so I decided to send them to the store, and they had tricycles. And I used to put coveralls [on them], set their tricycles out in the street, and put a big hat and a net over them that went clear to the ground, and get them to the store. By the time we got there, the net was just black with mosquitoes.

Oh really! Now, was this in the summer? When was this?

From June on—as soon as it got hot—May and June.

So you couldn't do anything out in your yard?

Well, we did, but then you were very uncomfortable.

Oh, I'd never heard of that.

And I remember that year, it was in the thirties, and the mosquitoes were so bad the principal of the high school, during graduation, spent the whole graduation hour with a mosquito-flitter—you know what those are? A pump gun. It's just a pump. And he'd pump the mosquito spray on your legs—went up and down the aisles to pump it on the legs of the people that were sitting there, listening to graduation.

Did that continue? Is it still like that?

No.

How did they get rid of them?

They spray, and they sprayed just the other day. I think yesterday Joe told me he heard the airplane spraying the river. They used to spray the town.

What comes from the river?

Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water. So they're not in the river, proper, but whatever stagnant water there is around. And that's what they spray. Now they tell me the mosquitoes are bad in town, but I haven't felt any.

Does the light attract them? Like the electricity and the lights?

Maybe. The light is more likely to attract millers than mosquitoes, though, I think. But they do have those bug lights that are supposed to attract them and kill them. I never had one.

Oh my, so there were a lot of mosquito bites to take care of!

Yes, there was. Now, some people are not affected. Giles Altenburg—he's part of the Fisher family—could have a thousand on him, and he never knew it. But my children always...The best thing you can put on children, like on sunburn, you put sour milk or cream or mayonnaise or something like that

Now what about when you were camping on the river on those summers? Were you bothered by mosquitoes then?

Well, the children just jumped in the water. [laughter] There were lots of mosquitoes down

there, yes. But either people were different, or things didn't bother you—mosquitoes were part of living. So we just lived with mosquitoes. Just like the people that came across the plains—they undoubtedly had all kinds of bugs and whatever. But you seldom ever hear about them, do you?

Uh-huh. Well, in San Diego, we always hear about the fleas that were in our dry Old Town.

The first year I went to California, we went to Santa Barbara, and we camped on the beach, and I got fleas. Every time I think of Santa Barbara, I think of fleas, as far as I'm concerned. That's the only time I ever saw any fleas, was down there.

You mentioned that your husband Louis was a member of the volunteer firemen. Tell us about that.

I don't know when the firemen organized as volunteer firemen, but my husband was one of the members, anyway. But the first fire engine was parked over in the Lemaire Garage, which was across from the store. And there was a bell at the head of the stairs, and anybody that knew anything about a fire starting anywhere would send word or run up and ring the bell, and the firemen would start off with their hand truck. I think they had firemen dances when I taught school here, but at least after we were married, Louie was a fireman. But anyway, that was a big event of the year, was the fireman dances.

Where was that held?

At the Shovelin Hall, which isn't any more. Just one *more* of the things that we don't have.

And where was that?

It was on Reese Street. But that was a really big affair.

Describe it. What kind of clothes did people wear?

Oh, everybody wore evening clothes. And of course the firemen wore their uniforms and their hats and whatever. But you never went unless you were...

Did women make their evening dresses, or did you go somewhere to buy them, or buy them from a catalog? Where did they get their evening dresses?

Well, there was a dress store next to our store. In the early days they sold bedding and men's clothes and women's clothes. They eventually closed out that sort of thing and they rented the store to a woman that was called Mrs. Phelps. Her husband was the sheriff here.

Now, when you say "they" used to carry—was it Lemaire who carried clothes?

Yes, when they were first opened, in those early years. So that we bought our dresses over there if we didn't make them.

So did the Lemaire family orchestra play at the firemen's dance? Who provided the music?

I'm trying to think. They didn't play as a band. They might have played part of the time, but they weren't the dance music, because they were all firemen, I guess, I don't know.

Did they hire a band?

They must have hired an orchestra.

Did they have food?

No, you went downtown to eat.

So it was a dance. What kind of dancing did they do?

Well, in those days there was the waltz and the one-step, the two-step, and the fox-trot.

Did everyone dance then?

Well, a lot of people went to the dances. I suppose there were some sifting. We all danced as couples. I remember I won a prize for a prize waltz once.

You did!? You were a good dancer? Was your husband a good dancer?

He was a beautiful dancer. Nobody ever danced like he did, because when you see these prize waltzes on TV, that's the way he danced.

Where did he learn to dance?

He was just naturally musical, I guess.

Oh, so it went into the dance, his rhythm.

He was very, very musical. Anything out of [tune], he noticed right away. If Jeannie would strike a wrong note on the piano, he'd yell in from the dining room, "Jeanne, that's the wrong note. Try it again." I didn't even notice.

He had a good ear for it.

Yes. He should have done something with music. But Louie was kind of like I was, I think. He did a lot of everything.

That's what it sounds like.

I guess we never could settle on one thing to do—he didn't either. He worked on the railroad, he did mining, he did a lot of carpentry and building houses around, and he could do anything in the house: the wiring and the plumbing and all that stuff. And then of course he worked over there for so many years.

Did he like working in the store?

We wanted to run the store, we wanted to buy it. But Uncle Louie said—he told me this one day—he said, "I would never, *never* ask anybody to live in this place like I have." He wouldn't give it to us—not because he didn't want us to have it...

He didn't want you to live that life.

He didn't want us to be stuck like that. And I guess that's why I was in the store, because I used to stay there so he could go.

Oh, so your husband could do other things.

Well, so Uncle Louie could go places.

Well, you were a wonderful daughter-in-law.

[with emotion] They always used to hunt and fish.

Eleanor, you showed me a picture when I was leaving yesterday of a Lemaire Garage, and no one has talked about it. What can you tell us about the Lemaire Garage?

It was started before I came to town. I don't know how many years old it was then. But it was the first garage in Battle Mountain,

and it was called the Ford Garage. They used to buy Fords by the carload, and they were all what they called "knocked down" when they came here, all in pieces, and the boys had to put them together. And my husband often talks about putting all these Fords together.

Did they sell them?

Yes.

They sold them to dealers?

They just sold them to the public. They were the dealer.

Oh, so it wasn't just a garage, it was also an auto dealership.

Yes. I don't know how many they sold, but I know he talks about buying them. You had to buy a carload of them—they wouldn't ship individual parts out here.

Was it a big place to handle all of that?

No, it wasn't too big.

Was there a lot next to it where they would put the cars when they were put together?

Well, there was plenty of ground there. I supposed they used it.

And all the boys worked there too?

Yes, they had a good many mechanics there. I can't tell you the names of the rest of them. Now that was the first fire station, that garage. And the boys that worked in the garage were the firemen.

Oh, for goodness sakes!

There was a bell across the street, that people ran and rang. Up at the head of the stairs was this bell. If there was a fire anyplace, everybody sent word. That was the way [they alerted everyone.] In later years, they had a siren on the fire station, when it was built. The fire station right now, that fire station was built when my son was County Commissioner, and he designed that whole place. I wanted him so badly to put his name on it and put his handprint on it, and he wouldn't do it.

Modest! Now, was the garage an active garage when you were married?

Yes.

Did your husband still work there sometimes?

Not for wages, I don't think.

Who managed the garage? Who was the top guy?

René Lemaire, I guess. Because when Louie quit, he took over. He was a taker anyway. We won't talk about that. Anyway, they needed service stations, so they took the equipment, I suppose, and part of the men, and started a service station, which was the first service station in Battle Mountain.

Now where was the service station?

It was on the other side of the store in a house. It was a house, originally. And they simply put a front thing on it, and gas tanks and whatever and used it. It was a service station—my son worked there when he was going to high school, so it was going in the forties.

Did you have someone manage it? Or was it still family-managed?

No, René took it over.

Oh, René took that too. So the Lemaire family really not only contributed all the necessities for the town, but were very creative about starting new businesses, when they saw needs in the town.

Uh-huh.

Was Uncle Louie the originator of some of these things? the garage and service station?

When Uncle Louie was a young man, the first thing he did was to own sheep. He went in with a Basco [Basque] and bought several thousand head of sheep.

Who did he go in with?

I couldn't tell his name—a Basco sheep man, anyway. They had a lot of sheep which they took various places to feed them. But one of their corrals was out there where the B.M. is on the hill. We didn't talk about the B.M. did we?

No.

Oh boy! The B.M. is up on the hill and his sheep corrals were down below it at what we called Blossom Springs. There were big springs there.

Was that part of Grace Rose's Blossom family?

I think it was, probably. It was a good place to hunt arrowheads, and I always wanted to sift the sand. My husband and my father-in-law sifted the sand out there, and they got *lots* of arrowheads out of the bottom of that spring. The Indians used to shoot into the springs for fish, or maybe ducks or whatever was along.

So how long did they have these sheep?

When A.D. Lemaire and son died, he, on his death bed, asked Uncle Louie to come into the store and take care of the family. So he went into the store.

This is when Grandpa Lemaire died?

Yes, A.D. Lemaire. Then Uncle Louie took over the store.

He was the oldest of the sons?

Yes, he was the oldest son. So he ran that until he died. He had a stroke in 1954, and then he lived for about four years after that.

Where did he live?

Right here. Louie stayed home and took care of him.

Oh, your husband took care of his dad. Then it was in your home?

We had to move over here to take care of them.

Oh, I see, from that other little house.

We left our house.

And were your children pretty grown by then?

Jeanne was married, and she lived on a ranch. Her husband supervised the T.S. Ranch then. They were just kids. And Louie, of course, was in the Army. Then when he came home, he ran a service station.

The Lemaire service station?

No, he ran a service station in Sparks and was married and had children.

When Uncle Louie came into the house here, it was you and your husband and Uncle Louie? the three of you?

No, his wife was living. Louie was raised in this house. And then when we were mated, we moved over into the other house. But when the old folks couldn't take care of themselves, we came back to live with them, and we rented our house.

I see, so you were taking care of them too, not just your husband.

Well, yes. But as far as Uncle Louie was concerned, after he became bedridden, after he had his stroke, I couldn't possibly take care of him, because I couldn't lift him.

Right.

But of course Louie could lift him and take him to the bathroom and all sorts of things.

Was your mother-in-law still alive?

Yes. She lived ten years after he did.

Did you do all the cooking and housework and everything for everybody?

No, I don't think so.

She was still able to do things?

We had an Indian.

Oh good, you had some help.

Doreen's mother worked here for years and years.

Oh, you showed me the picture, the one that you were hugging in the picture?

Yeah, the one that does my hair and whatever now. But her mother worked here for Kate.

Would she come every day?

Yes, she came all the time. She was very definitely an Indian woman. And the Indians, to this day, hate the white people. Her name was Jenny Blossom. She was not related in any way to the white Blossoms, but the Indians just took the names.

Oh, the way the slaves used to.

Uh-huh. So there's lots of Blossoms. So Doreen's name was Blossom until she was married. There's a big family of them.

So this woman would come and help every day?

Yes. [chuckles] She was a very nice person. She was always going to teach me how to make Indian baskets out of willows, but like a fool, I never learned. But I remember one thing about her: She used to move furniture every time she cleaned. If she cleaned the bedroom, she put the bed in a different place, and the bureau in a different place. She always moved things. And I remember [chuckles] one day Uncle Louie said to her, "Jenny, don't you ever move my bed again, because I want to *find* it when I go to bed!" [laughter] And

Doreen does the same thing: if she cleaned a cupboard, she would move everything and put it in a different place.

Does she come to help you?

She used to. I hired her when my husband was bedridden, because I thought that he would probably get to the place where I couldn't take care of him, and she could help me lift him, because he was a big man—he was six feet tall. But he never did get to that point. So then I kept her on for a while, but I decided that I was just wasting that much money, so I just have her come do my hair now.

So let's move back: The four of you are in the house here. Were you then going over to help in the store? What were you doing? We're moving pretty far ahead, but since we're there where he's in this house, how long was Uncle Louie an invalid?

About four years: from 1954 to 1958.

How was his mind? Was he alert? Did he know what was going on?

Yes, to an extent. But I think that probably whatever drugs they gave him to take away the pain that he had... You know what they do. So you really don't know just how alert your people can be when they're ill, until you take them off [the drugs].

Sure. I want to move you back. Let's go back and cover the war years, back to the forties, because this is in the later fifties. We'll come back to that. After the Depression, when the war was starting, how did it affect your family? That was World War II. Did anyone in your family.

Yes, my father died during those years, and my mother came to live with us. She only lived a year, and then she died here. But my parents both were eighty-five years old when they died. Anyway, Uncle Louie was running the store at the time, as boss, but Louie and I were both helping there. I don't know what else we were doing. But Louie became head of the Red Cross, and then I took over the Red Cross, so that between the two of us, we were head of it most of the time, I think—I don't remember anybody else. And then he took over the Ration Board. He often remembers things that happened at the Ration Board. You could only have a certain amount of things: a certain amount of gasoline, and so on. There were farmers out here that when it came to rationing gasoline, they had a certain number of cows or whatever. But when it came to taxing, they only had *half* that many cows. Now lots of men running the Ration Board would never know these people well enough, but he always talks about the people that he argued with, "Well, you told me you only had so many, and now you have so many more?!" So he went through that. Then during those war years, I remember I had sewing classes where the women came and made garments for the soldiers. We made thousands of pajamas, I think. I don't remember how many pairs of pajamas we made.

Now let's go back to the Red Cross. What were the functions of the Red Cross that you were involved with? You said you were heading it and ran it.

One thing we did—and I don't know whether this was part of the Red Cross or not—I guess it was—when the boys were going to the war, they came and signed up with me.

In your home?

No, up in the halt.

Above the store in the lodge hall.

I remember one boy came and they have to fill out a form, of course. I asked him to fill out his next of kin, and he said he didn't want anybody notified. So anyway [with emotion] we talked about that. Anyhow, he came back from the war. I talked to him about what he should do, so he told me when he came back that he had written to his sister, and he'd gone to see her when he came back. [with emotion] I didn't know him, he was a stranger to me.

Uh-huh, one of the boys that came up and talked to you.

Then of course you got letters and wrote letters.

Did you make bandages or any of those things?

No, all I remember us ever making was the pajamas.

Was that up in the lodge hall?

No, we sewed at the high school, because there were lots of machines up there. We had five or six machines.

Were you in charge of that?

Yes.

Where did the material come from?

The government furnished the material.

Was that all over? Or was that unique here?

No, I don't think so—I think all over the United States there were groups making things. Of course a lot of people crocheted mufflers and socks.

Did you send "care packages" of kinds of foods?

Yes.

How was the town affected during the war, besides all of this activity? Did a lot of the boys go?

Well one boy, Don Sumin, was in Patton's army. He's still living, but he's retired and doesn't live here. On account of his health, he lives someplace else. But he was so disgusted, and if you mention the war to him—because he was with the group that went in and took Berlin. And they made them back out and gave it to the Russians. And he never got over that. [chuckles] And I never did either!

Did any of your immediate family go into the war?

My son went between wars. Jeanne's first husband went into the Korean War—he spent those years in the Korean War.

But they're a little too young for World War II.

My husband was too young for World War I, and he was too old for World War II, so he missed both of those.

Were there any changes in the town, with the jobs, losing the men, or the ranches or the sheepherding? Did it affect the economy?

I don't know that it did.

It wasn't visible?

Not enough to... There were a good many boys from here that went.

Did it mean more women got jobs that they wouldn't have had if the men were still here?

I don't know that either.

Nothing?

I couldn't tell you.

How was the store affected during the war?

Well, we were affected only by the rationing. People had to bring their coupons for their little things. I've got some, I've got my ration books and my little coupons.

Did it hurt business because they couldn't buy as much as they would otherwise?

I suppose it did. But nobody kicked about it—nobody even noticed it.

Did it change the kinds of things you sold? Because I think during the war there were some things that civilians weren't allowed to use, because they needed it for the war effort. And didn't it also stop the building of houses and making refrigerators, and so on? Did anyone feel that?

I don't think we sold enough of that sort of thing here. We didn't sell lumber at that time. The lumber people might have noticed a difference, I don't know. But all the things that we noticed were in the food line. Of course I just quit using sugar, because you couldn't get sugar and you couldn't get gasoline and tires, so you just walked.

The Lemaire Garage must have been affected greatly.

I suppose they were hurt.

Well, anything more on the war years before we move away from that? That's the forties.

I don't know.

During this period, did you do any more teaching?

I substituted all my life when I wasn't busy at something else.

They would call you if they needed you?

They would call me and I would go spend an afternoon or a morning or seven days or whatever they needed. And I taught *everything* all up and down the school ladder—you know, grammar school to high school, whatever. I even got mixed up in calculus, but I couldn't do it! But anyway, the children taught *me* and so they learned, and that's the best way you can teach, anyway. I was teaching, finishing the fourth grade in a grammar school, and I wanted to teach the next year in a grammar school.

Now when was this? What time period are we talking about?

In 1949.

You were teaching as a substitute, or you started teaching...

No, I was substituting. Whoever was teaching there had a fight with the principal and quit. So I guess I shouldn't tell this, but anyway, I'll just not mention the names. The man who was head of the school board told me that the place was already taken, so he wouldn't hire me. So I went to summer school

anyway, to keep my certificate going, even though he wouldn't let me teach the next year. Anyhow, at summer school, when we were leaving, there was a woman crying near the door. And so three or four of us stopped and said we'd better go find out what she's crying about. So we went in and she told us this story: Her husband was ill, and she got fired where she was teaching before, which was somewhere over at Elko, and she didn't have a school. This was at the end of summer school, in August. So I said to her, "Well, I know that the fourth grade is vacant in Battle Mountain. You phone [to the head of the school board,] and tell him that I said maybe it was available," and he hired her on the spot. He had never seen her, had no idea who she was or what she was. He hired her just like that, after telling me in the spring that there was no opening.

Oh for goodness sakes!

Anyway, she came, and she really couldn't do the fourth grade, so they put her in the second grade. And she taught here for a good many years—people were sorry for her. But anyway, she taught Louie's oldest child.

And so what were you doing?

I was running the store at the time. [chuckles] But anyway, he didn't learn anything. He couldn't write and he couldn't read. So Louie and Sally and I all went to this woman and asked her to keep him in the second grade another year, because he wasn't able to go on—we knew he wasn't. And she said, "Oh no, I just couldn't do that. He's such a *nice* little boy. He just sits and smiles all the time." It made me mad, because I thought, "Well, that isn't what we send him to school for!" Anyway, so she didn't keep him. But he was kept in the sixth grade. She went all the

way to the sixth grade. But he never did learn to write.

Oh my!

Louie writes worse than I do, but he finished college. He's captain of the fire department in Reno right now, has been. He's a wonderful youngster.

Let's go back to your story: You went to summer school to keep up your certificate. Then what did you do? Did you teach any more?

Yes, that same year the people from Beowawe came here—Mr. Martin—and asked me if I would come out and finish the year there.

How far is Beowawe?

Twenty-some miles. They had had trouble with their teachers: they had a man and wife teaching, and the trouble was over a knife, and I never figured out whether they used it, or the children. It was dogs and knives, anyway.

Anyone get hurt?

No, I don't think so. But anyway, they fired them. And so I went out there to teach, and that was at Christmastime. So I finished that year.

Did you drive?

Yes. I had a Plymouth that was my father's.

What year was this when you started there?

In 1950, because I taught there four years, and I quit when Uncle Louie had his stroke. But I drove that distance every day for those

four years and enjoyed every minute of it. One reason was that I got there before I started from here!

What do you mean?

They were on railroad time, and we were on Daylight Savings Time, so there was an hour difference. So that I'd start from here at 9:00 and get there at a quarter to nine. It was interesting. And the drive was very pleasant—I had some experiences, and I could get my mind from my school to my store and vice versa

And you loved to teach, so you were probably glad to be teaching. What grade were you teaching there?

When they asked me to go, I thought, "Well, now I'm just really back home, because this was a country school where I knew all about." There were twenty-nine pupils in eight grades. There were five Negroes, the Wright family. And the first day the oldest Negro boy sat up in his seat. He said, "You'd better be good to my family, because if you aren't, I'll fix you!" And I don't know whether they had had trouble with the other teachers...

Oh, maybe, sure.

I said, "Well, I've taught for years. I've never had any trouble yet, but I might." Anyway, I never did. But he was the only older boy that was there, and he used to like to tease the younger ones. So I tried to get him interested in something. And you know that Negroes like to draw just like Indians do. And they're very adept at it. So I picked up a geometry book that was there—some teacher must have had it there. And I asked him if he would like to try to draw the things that were in there. So he started, and he did

all the theorems in that geometry book before school was over!

You were such a good teacher!

I didn't have to teach him anything, because we just talked about what he was doing. But he drew beautifully, and he was so proud of his drawings.

Now, did you have to teach all of those grades and all of those kids?

Yes. It isn't any problem. People think that this is a big problem.

Sounds like it.

But teaching an ungraded school like that is much easier than teaching twenty youngsters all alike. There's nobody bored in your school, because the younger children are listening to the older children.

And they can learn more.

The older children are teaching the younger children. Everybody that graduates from that school has had this material for eight years, you know. But when you're teaching in schools like they have nowadays, where you have twenty or thirty youngsters in the same grade, you listen to the same child doing the same thing that you yourself are doing. And if you have any sense at all, you already know it, so you're bored to death, so you'll probably get into trouble.

But you had to be a good teacher to be able to deal with all those ages and all those grades.

I guess so, but it wasn't any problem anyway. But it was that year that Mrs. Miller

brought her boy. She came to the school and she asked me if she could leave Myron there to go to school. I said, "Well, we'll talk about his background. His father works on the railroad, you said?" "Yes." "Well then, he's eligible to go to any school on the railroad." I guess it wouldn't have mattered whether he worked on the railroad or not, you could go to any school in Nevada. Anyway, I said to her then, "I'll be so glad to have him," because he was a great big boy. He was in eighth grade. "Because he can lift our movie machine. It's too heavy for any of us to lift."

There was a movie machine?

We used to pick it up and put it on a box a little higher—a great big thing. BLM (the Bureau of Land Management) got it for us—it was second-hand.

What kind of movies would you show? Where did you get the film?

We sent for them, to movie things [distributors]. And then we got a lot of them through the BLM. We got films from the BLM on vegetation and films that showed how wheat grows.

Oh, educational films.

And then it showed fields of flowers and how they sprouted and how they grew and bloomed. It's amazing what you can see on those films. And of course there were a lot of animal stories on those. And then we had other films that were the different countries. I remember we had a very beautiful one on Peru with all its mining, all its caves, and all its history. So that's the sort of things we did.

Educational and entertaining too!

Anyway, when Myron graduated... [overcome by emotion] He must have found a book of Shakespeare, and I knew the name of the play. But he wanted me to read Shakespeare to him all noon hour.

How old was he?

He was an eighth-grader. But I'm sure he didn't understand a word of it, but he liked the cadence of it. So we did the whole book. But when his mother came to the graduation, [overcome by emotion] she told me that when she brought him there she was on her way to take him to the reform school, that he'd had trouble with every school up and down the line. But all the boy needed was to be needed!

So your helping him and reading with him lunch hours.

Well, when I said that we needed him to lift the movie machine, it made him feel important, and that's all most bad children need. There are some so bad that you can't do anything about it. But most of the children, all that they need is to be needed.

And then your spending lunch hour with him, that made him feel very special, that you cared about his learning and about him.

I guess. Anyway, he went into the Army when he got out of school. I don't know whether he went to high school or not—I don't know what happened to him during those years. Anyway, he was a cook in the Army for years and years. His folks still live here.

So how long did you teach at Beowawe?

Three years-and-a-half,

That's a long time.

I stayed overnight one night, because it snowed.

Where did you stay?

In a room in the school. And that night there was a mild earthquake. And I felt it and I got up so fast to try to see it, but it was over before.

And you were all alone, sleeping there?

Yes, it was a room in the schoolhouse. I like earthquakes.

You like earthquakes?!

Uh-huh.

You should be in California!

Aren't they interesting?

Yes.

I never was in a real bad one.

Why did you leave your teaching job at Beowawe?

Uncle Louie just had his stroke. He lived for four years afterward. Anyway, I really took over the store. Louie came back and forth, but he had to stay home a lot of the time to be with his father and his mother. It was sort of in the red when I took over, and there weren't any groceries in there.

Now this was in the fifties?

Yes, 1954. What I did was move some of the shelving to shut off the back part of the

store, so we just had the front of the store. And I had \$270 I remember, which I spent at Lindley's to buy groceries with.

At where?

Lindley, in Reno, was the company we bought groceries from. We bought from them for years. They went out of business finally, I guess. They buy all kinds of trashy stuff nowadays.

These groceries came by the train in the fifties?

Yes. I used to have a little cart, a little platform thing with wheels that they wheeled it in. Anyway, I bought just staple I bought three or four kinds of cereals, which filled up the shelves, and eggs, and milk—anyway, just staples. But I opened the store from way early in the morning until way late at night, and on Sunday. And that was the first weekend that any store had been open in Battle Mountain, and they were mad at me! I'm telling you, the storekeeper, Butch Hinman, just gave me all holy hell!

Was it because it was competition? Why were they upset?

Well, because I was keeping it open so late and so long.

And why didn't they want you to do that?

Because they didn't keep open, so they were afraid I'd get...

I see.

Nobody [else] stayed open later than four o'clock, nor did they open before eight o'clock in the morning. So I opened it anyway.

I worked there from 1954 until I retired in 1979.

What time in the morning did you open the store?

I think when I first started like that, I didn't open until eight o'clock, and then I closed at nine, and not Sundays.

How many worked there those long hours?

There was only myself.

You worked all those long hours?!

In the sixties, the Cortez Mine was going, and the men used to come into the store to buy their stuff to go at five o'clock in the morning, so then I opened at five. But I made sandwiches for them to take.

Oh, how smart!

So I had to open at five o'clock in the morning. I used to make a hundred sandwiches and thought nothing of it! But you know, you made your filling the day before, and buttered your bread.

What kind of sandwiches? What would you make?

I think that most of my [pre]-made stuff would be tuna fish sandwiches. And then I sold a lot of ham and cheese there. I just got sliced ham and sliced cheese and put it in. And then I always put a raw carrot and a piece of lettuce when I made them up.

Now, about how many of these miners would be coming in the store to get their lunches and drinks or whatever from you?

Oh, not more than twenty or thirty, I guess.

So this was kind of a booming time? This was in the sixties?

I don't know whether it was booming or not, but there was a lot of mining going on. But the men who came in and got their lunches early had to get out to Gold Acres or wherever they were going, out that way, and that took them an hour to get out there, because you go past Beowawe to go out there.

Did they pick the workers up by bus?

There were no buses—the men just drove themselves.

Some mines have their own vans.

They didn't have vans.

Were these single men, or men who didn't come with their families? Did they live in boarding houses around town, or motels?

There were no motels, of course.

Did they have the trailers around for the workers?

No. Gosh, I don't know when trailers ever started. In the seventies? sixties? Sixties, maybe.

For the workers here in town?

Uh-huh. I think most of our trailers came in here with the barium people.

Okay, so that's like the sixties. When you opened the store that early, who else helped you in the store?

Well, there wasn't anybody helping in the store—you didn't need any help.

Well, but it was such long hours.

That didn't matter.

What did you do about coming home at dinner?

We had a place in the back of the store where we made our lunches.

Oh, I see. Did you eat your dinners there too, by the store?

Sure. We ate whatever we had.

I see. Did your husband work there too with you?

He came back and forth from here, taking care of his father and mother.

So you were the one really running it.

Yes.

Once you started with the groceries, did you build up with other supplies and stock that you sold in the store? Tell me about at, as you started to get it going.

Nothing but groceries—except that I had a place in the back that I sold women's summer dresses and underwear and hats.

Where would you buy those?

Oh, I don't remember the name of the company—some costume company from back East.

You'd mail order it?

Uh-huh. When you had anything left over...I bought on consignment.

Oh, that's smart.

So if you had it left over, you just sent it back. But I remember they quit wearing hats, really, so I had a lot of hats left over. I wrote to them and told them I was sending the hats back, and they wrote and told me to keep them. [chuckles] So I just kept them.

Because it didn't pay for them to...

No, it didn't pay. During those years, outfits used to send things that you never sent for, thinking that you would pay for them. They're still doing that, by the way. "Successful Gardening" sent me a lot of stuff. They're going to sue me. I hope they do!

You mean they sent you things that you didn't order?

Some place down in the southern states, I think it was Mississippi, sent yardage goods—bolts of beautiful stuff. And I said to Uncle Louie, "You don't have to pay for that, because we didn't order it." We never have ordered anything like that. And he wouldn't keep it, being an honest man. I wasn't honest—I would have kept it! He made me send it all back.

What did you do, send it back?

Yes. He sent it back—he wouldn't keep anything like that, but I would have.

What else did you stock in the store as you began to get it out of the red?

That's all we did. Of course we sold fishing and hunting licenses, and all that stuff there for years. We were the only place that sold them. Swackhamers sell it now, Ace Hardware. But we had it for years.

Did you sell meat and fish and chickens? Did you sell those kinds of butcher items?

I don't know whether he sold them as early as that, but in the sixties I sold meat. We used to buy loins and cut them up for lamb chops or pork chops, and then bought whole hams and we sliced them. I bet I cut up more loins than you can mention, in the shop. I'm a good butcher. And the hams that we got were beautiful.

Where did you get your meats?

There is no such meat made any more. Wells Meat Company, I think. They had the best meat.

And where was that?

From Oregon someplace, they came down here. For years they did. We used to buy great big rounds of sausage and baloney and salami and slice it off for people. It was gorgeous. The company went broke in the seventies because one of the brothers went to Las Vegas and lost all his money, and it broke the company. I don't know how many thousand dollars he lost down there.

Did you sell fresh produce?

Oh yes.

And where did you get that?

A man from Winnemucca brought it up here.

Was yours the main place where residents of Battle Mountain bought their food and supplies?

No, we were the “little” store. Swackhamer had a bigger store, and Butch Hinman had a store. He ran a butcher shop. I guess he told you about his butcher shop.

That’s right.

And then he had a store also. And when we started selling chickens, Butch was going to close us up, he was going to murder us, because we sold chickens.

So then was the store starting to prosper after you got it rolling with doing all that?

Yes, we made money in those years. The IRS (Internal Revenue Service) came one morning. I knew they were in town, because they were investigating some people they thought had not turned in as much money as they should have. This man came in the store and he said he was IRS and I said, “I know you are. What can I do for you?” He said, “Well, I want to look through your books.” So I took him in the office and said, “There’s all my invoices. And I’ve worked very hard to get them all in order and all added up and everything. And there’s my return checks with the invoices.” I thought I had everything in order. He said, “I don’t want any of that.” I said, “Well, I thought you said you were going to check me?!” He said, “All I want is your check book.” I think there was more than one check book. Anyway, I went in the walk-in and got

the check books out, and I gave them to him. He took them all home and he came back the next morning and he said, “You have earned more money than you said you had.” I said, “How do you know that, you didn’t even look at anything.” He said, “Well, you say you...” I’ve forgotten how many thousand dollars we had. “You say you’ve earned only this much money in a year. My wife spends that much money for clothes in a month.” I said, “What’s that got to do with *us*?!” He said, “You couldn’t *possibly* have lived on that much money.” I said, “Mister, *we don’t* live, we exist! Your wife has no conception of living as we live.” Because we didn’t go anywhere, we didn’t dress, we didn’t go out to eat, we didn’t do any of the things that people do. And he said, “Well anyway, you owe me a thousand dollars.” And I said, “I’m not going to pay it,” and I swore at him. And he said, “Well, you’ll *have* to pay it.” And I said, “You can put me in jail if you want to, I don’t care. I’ll have a good rest!” He said, “We won’t do anything to you, it’s your husband that’s going to have to do this, because it’s all in his name.” So I went home and Louie went over and talked to him. Anyway, we paid him his thousand dollars, which we didn’t have. Everybody said, “Well, you shouldn’t have paid it!” So a friend of ours—maybe they were in town, some auditors, the people they have to audit their books—*they* came in the store, and they’re still in business too, in Elko. And they said to me, “Mrs. Lemaire, you should never have paid them.” I said, “I didn’t pay them, my husband paid them.” And they said, “Well, we can get back half of it for you, but they’ll be after you for the rest of your life.” And he said, “What you should do is hire us to set up your bookkeeping for you so that you won’t get into trouble any more.” I said, “Alright, how much is *that* going to cost me?”

“Well, we can’t tell you.” I said, “But you want me to sign a contract, but you can’t tell me how much it’s going to be?!” He said, “Well, we just have to do it that way, because we won’t know how much work we’re going to do to go back through the books.” I said, “You think I’m crazier than the IRS man did!” Can you imagine signing a contract when he had no idea?! Now, if they went back through [all] the books, the Lemaire Store would be sixty, seventy, eighty years. They had *never* been audited, as far as I know, until they started paying income tax. It wasn’t until the forties. So they could have gone back to the forties, I guess, and audited my books. Anyway, nobody ever audited the books.

So what did you do?

I just did up the income tax and took it to an income tax person.

Now during the time when you were in the store and it was starting to thrive, tell me a little bit about the most popular things that sold besides the sandwiches—which was a wonderful idea. What made your store different from the others? What did you have and sell that the others didn’t have that would attract people to your store?

We really didn’t have anything that was different, but we were there at different times. People used to come in and buy one loaf of bread or five pounds of sugar or something. And people often said to me, “Eleanor, why do you bother with these people?” We delivered in those times. If people could phone for a loaf of bread, you delivered it!

Really?! Did someone from your store deliver?

Oh yes, we always delivered.

Did you have a delivery boy?

People started coming there at odd hours, and then they came at regular hours. And because they bought bread there one day, they would buy more there. Of course every person has their favorite stores, so we had customers that bought most of their things at our store, and a few things at the others—and the other way around. But when Uncle Louie was there, I delivered for him. And then Louie used to deliver for me when I was in the store, or he would take care of the store while I delivered.

Would you take it in a car and drive it around?

Yes, we had a truck.

And you would just take things around? Once a day, or what?

Yes, every day, once a day.

And then would they pay you at the door? How did that work?

They charged them. Everything was charged in those days. In delivering, we delivered for Filippinis. Now Rose Filippini’s husband ran a big ranch out here. And he would work late and come in after dark. And she would phone for groceries for him to take out in the morning at three or four o’clock in the morning when he left early. So I would take the groceries and put them in *his* truck, in *his* garage at nine o’clock at night [chuckles] for him to take out the next morning. We did that all summer.

If they paid you by the hour, you’d get two cents an hour! [laughter]

I wouldn’t get that much! But anyway, I often remember that.

Did you have regular baked goods, or did you also sell things that people baked? Did you have more than just Wonder Bread kind of food?

No, we just bought from bakeries and sold it.

Where did you get your dairy supplies, like the milk and butter and cream and cream cheese?

The same people that are running it now.

Did they deliver it to you?

Yes.

So you started to have things delivered to you—not everything sent on the train. In a later period, trucks would come?

The trains quit delivering in the fifties, didn't they? I think as soon as the trucking concerns started, everything came by trucks.

Refrigerated trucks? Would they bring it right to your store?

Uh-huh.

Did your husband help you with determining what to order? Or were you in charge of that?

Well, I guess we talked it over—what we were out of and what we needed, or the salesman came and talked to us.

What did you like the best about being in the store?

I don't know. [chuckles] Just doing it, I guess.

Did you like dealing with the people when they'd come in?

Yes, I liked people. We had one delivery man that came with the groceries, and he came later and later and later. And he used to phone me to come back over [to the store] that he was here. He did that for weeks and weeks, and finally another delivery man said to me, "Eleanor, why are you letting him get by with this?" I said, "Well, he said he couldn't get here until then." He said, "Do you know what he's doing? He has a girlfriend in Lovelock, and he's spending all day in Lovelock with her, and then he comes up here in the evening and expects you to go back to the store."

Oh, for goodness sakes!

So anyway, I faced him with that, and that was all.

Did he start to come earlier?

Oh yes!

What did you like the least about working in the store? What was the hardest for you?

To turn people down.

You mean, who wanted to keep charging and couldn't pay?

Yes. Many, many people owed us. If we could collect the money that people owed to that store, we'd have a least a million dollars, because they owed A.D. Lemaire, they owed L.A. Lemaire, they owed Eleanor Lemaire. There are people living here in town that owed me.

Was some of it that they thought they could get away with it, and they used the money for

something else? Or was it because some were out of work for so long they didn't have money?

There were lots of them that could pay. They could pay, but they wouldn't. There's one outfit in town now that owed us about five hundred dollars. And when he declared bankruptcy—all the people that he owed money to took it to the bankruptcy court or signed it. He met Louie on the street, and asked him not to put his name in, because he was going to pay him—he was going to pay him right away, the next payday, he was going to pay him next week, he was going to pay him next...Louie used to meet him on the street all the time, and he never *did* pay us, but we never put it on the bankruptcy thing either. We had two or three customers that did that do us. He's still here, had a good job. I guess he worked for the gold company. I guess he's out of a job now. But his family is all raised. She's big shot society.

Oh my! So how many years did you do this? You started in the fifties when you were working such long hours?

Well, Bud [son Louis] came home in 1961, so then he worked in the store. And in 1962 or 1963, I guess, he became county commissioner. And he was county commissioner twenty-four hours a day. They talk about how hard they work now! But he was the kind of man that if the road people were supposed to build a road, he went out to see what they were doing.

Oh, I see, to inspect.

And he knew what they were doing, and he knew what was going on. And he *talked* to people. If anybody wanted something done, or wanted to know something, they could stop

Louie and he would talk to them. But lots of the commissioners you can't talk to. I would never think of going and asking these guys something, because they'd probably chop me off.

So he was working in the store, and then he became county commissioner. So then what happened?

And he still worked in the store.

So by then had Uncle Louie died?

Yes.

So was your husband working full-time in the store too?

No, my husband became ill—cigarettes. He died of cigarette smoking.

Oh dear.

And he wasn't able to do much of anything after 1970.

And you had to take care of him and the store?

And the store.

Did your son take over more and more of it, to relieve you during that period?

Yes. And then summers, when his girls were in high school, they used to come in. They were wonderful youngsters and they had a real good time in there. And they were real fun, because they spent all their time giggling.

They weren't serious?

They were just girls, but they were lovely girls, and I enjoyed having them.

How long was your husband ill?

Thirteen years. He was in bed for three.

Oh my! So were you working in the store and taking care of him through that period?

Fifty-nine. Then I leased the store to Rose Bebee. Later a Basco, Pete, came to town, and he wanted to lease the store. So he and Rose worked out some arrangement. Two years later, Louis, Jr. sold it to him. I would have liked to go back. I didn't know about it for years.

That's your son?

My son. But I didn't know that he [Pete] had bought the store. I didn't know the store was sold. But I left it in Rose's care in 1979. I didn't know that we didn't still own it for years. But then I couldn't do anything about it.

Let's back up a little bit When you leased the store, was your son still involved with the store?

Uh-huh.

He still worked in the store?

He quit working in the store in 1978, I think, to work for the insurance company.

He didn't want to work in the store?

No, he didn't want to run the store.

So is that when you leased it?

Yes, after he was gone. The girls went away to school or got married and they were gone. But the store was like many family business you should never inherit a store, or any part of a store, because it's not yours, but it is yours.

I see, each one has a percentage?

It should have been, but you have to be business-like to do it. But in this case, they were supposed to have it. I don't know, it was all just a mess as far as I was concerned. In other words, you could do the work, and keep it going...

But it wasn't yours.

But it wasn't yours.

Was it because it was only in your husband's name, not husband and wife?

No, it was in the whole family's name.

Oh, it stayed in the whole family name. I see, so that all of the Lemaire's...

All of the Lemaire's thought they owned part of it, or *did* own part of it.

I see.

I don't know. It was a financial mess from the time A.D. Lemaire died, as far as I'm concerned.

Well, now it's almost time to stop. I just want to wind up the store and tomorrow we'll do all the other subjects. Anything more in your period in the store that you haven't mentioned? Of course, if you think of anything tonight, we can add it tomorrow, but I want to really focus on the completion of that history and your involvement.

Oh, we didn't talk at all about the lodge hall, did we, except the lodges?

Well, we'll do the lodge tomorrow. On the store part, is there anything more that you can think

about, which was such a long investment of your time as well as the history of that store. Did the structure stay? After you closed off part of it, did the structure stay the same until the time you teased it?

Yes. Before my time, they quit selling men's wear and women's wear and all that stuff, and we leased and rented that little room that was next to us there.

Oh, okay. It was a separate room?

Yes. And it was leased to Mrs. Phelps for a long time as a women's clothing store. And then in later years, Kimball Elquist leased it, and he had a turquoise shop in there.

Now is that related to the one that's on the commission now?

Yes.

Is that a brother of Bill's?

No, he was the father.

What year are we talking about?

The seventies. He was in there from the seventies—maybe the sixties.

And then what did he do with that store?

Well, the price of turquoise went down and he left us. There was no one in there for a while, until Rose took over. And then of course when they bought the store, they incorporated that into the store building.

Are those people still the current owners of the store that's there now?

Yes, Pete. I can't tell you Pete's last name either.

That's okay.

Pete has definitely buried the Lemaires' store. He lowered the ceilings, put a new floor in. He took out the big windows and put bricks up there. We had beautiful windows in the store. Tomorrow I'll tell you about the windows.

What did he do with the windows?

He threw them away or sold them or did something, so that they're just ordinary windows in there now. There was a big window here and over there, and the doorway went in, so that there was this window on this side, like lots of stores. And now he's got it straight. But anyway...So he asked me one day if I wasn't thrilled about the way he'd improved the store, and I said, "No, you've ruined it." He couldn't understand what I meant. I think that probably he'd never seen a country store. Anyway, he had no love for the store.

Was it hard when you had to give up the store, or was it a big relief? Or a combination?

Well, it wasn't any relief to me. People thought I was tired of it or something, but I gave it up for two reasons: I didn't have any money to go on, because when Louie's family came, *they* lived out of the store, naturally, because he worked there. And people, like these people I was telling you about that went broke and whatever—people owed me so much money, and we took so many groceries out of there, that I just didn't have any capital to go on. That's why I leased it. And then I thought that if I quit there, that Louie would

be able to go with me somewhere—in our camper, for instance. But of course he never went.

We're going to end this session, and tomorrow we're going to have a lot more to finish. It'll give you time to think about it, and I'll think of some things, and we'll have a good session tomorrow. And if we're not finished tomorrow, then I'll see you on another day. We won't end it until we know that we've gotten everything that you can share. So for today, this is the end of the second session.

This is the third session with Eleanor Lemaire at her home, and this is June 16, 1993.

I'll tell you about the smallest, most-loved library in Lander County in the sixties. Mrs. Phelps, the lady who rented our dress shop next door to the store, and I decided to start a library with donated books. Well, Mrs. Phelps was there only a few hours a day, so the books were very soon moved into the store. And I had my little library in the back part of the store. One day in 1960 a young lady came to our store [Lemaire's]. She had parked an Elko County Bookmobile beside the building. She wanted permission to park there every two weeks, a "permanent" place for townspeople to come to inspect and borrow books. She was looking for a space to set up a small branch library. We made space in the store. As one came in, the library was first, back of a long glass showcase, lighted by a big window. The dictionary counter was there. My son Bud had built shelves. The space was not just a set of shelves, but a home for books for people. A small, much-loved, much-used library, attractive and available. Now, the books were not with the tomatoes or potatoes—they were

in a place by themselves, and back of a counter so that no one could reach them except the librarian. So that it really was like a small library, though it was only in a store building. And I was not a librarian, I just loved books and I was used to them because I had taught school all those years and read and whatever. Anyway, she brought many books—I think we must have had at least a thousand books there. And she brought a bookmobile down every two weeks and took back what books we had finished and traded them for new books. People came in the store and told me what books they would like to have, and brought back their books.

Did you issue library cards?

Yes, each book had a card in it and we took the cards out and kept them and put them back in the books when they were sent back to Elko—just like any library.

That sounds like a lot of work. Who handled that?

I did.

You did that on top of everything else?

Yes. Well, we had a drawer right there by the counter, and the people would hand me a book and I would put it in the drawer, and then at my leisure I would put it back on the shelf. We gave out a great many more books than most libraries do, for the reason that the store was open until nine o'clock at night, and that was seven days a week. So that people could come to buy a loaf of bread but say, "Well, I can take my book back, because I'm going to the store." So they would take their book back. And while I was getting their order ready,

maybe they would look at the shelves and say, "I would like to read *that* book," or "Do you have that book?" or "Would you send for this book or this author?" or whatever it was. So that in that way they did a lot of reading. Now the woman who drove the bookmobile told me that the thing to emphasize was to get people reading. She said, "Now don't worry about anything else, whether the books are back on time or whatever. You just worry about trying to circulate the books." So that's what I did.

What a contribution!

When Louie was building the shelves—that's Bud—he built a shelf which was like a table in the window. The lady brought down a huge dictionary, and so the dictionary was there. She brought me a nice set of encyclopedias and several books on the West, including West's *Book of the West*. And she came back and forth for about four years. Then she quit and went to Las Vegas. And to save my life, I can't, remember her name. Anyway, the next person that came was a retired colonel of the WACs (Women's Army Corps). I called her an old bat, and I still think she was. But the first thing she said was, "Oh my God! Was the local library leaving these books with *you*?! Of all things! You're not a librarian! People could come in and steal the books," and all that. "And there's that great big dictionary. You shouldn't have that, and you shouldn't have West's *History of the West*, and those encyclopedias." So she boxed them up and took them with her.

Oh, how awful!

She did! She took them! The Elko Library paid me a hundred dollars a month for

keeping this library. They have no record of me up there. Isn't that crazy?

That is so unusual, and such a wonderful contribution! Did the school children come in?

Oh yes, lots of children.

With the parents?

Yes. To go back to what she found fault with: was the fact that I didn't have these books segregated as she thought they should be. And I didn't have them put on the shelf right—they were either pushed back too far, or too far front—that sort of thing. And I put books together that people read. These people were reading all these books. As I did many times, I substituted for teachers who were ill, or for some reason. I was at the high school that afternoon and in walked this woman into my room and she told me, "I have gone and *taken* the books out of the store." And I was flabbergasted! And I presume the Elko Library *told* her to.

What year was this?

It must have been 1966.

So you had that library quite a few years.

At least four years that they came down here, and then we had our little library before that.

Did the town complain to them about taking away the library from your store?

Well, she didn't take them back to Elko, she put them in a van here, and had another woman in charge of them.

Like a bookmobile van?

Well, I never saw it, to tell you the truth—I was so angry that I never went near it. But the lady who had charge of it was the mother of the present sheriff. Anyway, when I look back, as I have the last few years, I wonder why I just didn't have her arrested for stealing. I should have, instead of letting her get by with this! She had no business with those books anyway—they were under my care, and I was responsible for them until they were back in the Elko Library, or they had given me notice that they were sending for them or something.

That was not a decent way to do it. And some of those books were probably not library books, but some of yours?

No, I never mixed them. I had my library books in the back. But they took those books and I never knew whether people returned the books that they had out, or whether they just kept them, or what happened to them. Isn't that crazy? A lot of them were returned to me, and I sent them back to the library. But why did I do that? I was too honest. I found books that she left on the shelves, and I returned those to the library. But why did I do that? I should have kept them. But anyway, I didn't. I have phoned the Elko Library asking the names of those involved. They assured me they had no record of such a project. So we dreamed all those years away. It was a nice, happy dream, all but the ending. After all these years I can't believe that awful woman. Some day, somehow, I will find out. Such an ending for years of happy events.

That was a most unusual service to your community.

I don't know how long the books were in this van or bookmobile or whatever you call it. But the county got the auditorium at the grammar school and they started a library there.

Is that the building that's now the courthouse?

Yes.

So they started a regular library?

They paid a librarian and the bookmobile came. Then they needed that room for the commissioners' meetings and that sort of thing. So then they moved it up into the civic center, where it still is.

When did they build the civic center?

Gosh, I don't know. I think that was built in the seventies.

Now, I want to know more about the development of the health care system after you had your children. Did you continue to have a good doctor like Dr. Clark?

Yes. There were several years here we had men that came and went. Dr. Hyde came and stayed for a number of years, and he was excellent. Now he was not only a doctor, but he was part of the community—he was more—so than Clark was. When the ambulance would go out, he would hear the call and he would be ready to go with them. He always went with them.

Did he have a family?

He had a wife. After Dr. Hyde died, they had odd doctors here at various times, so I really don't know much about the doctors.

We had one doctor, Dr. Bannister, who was here for quite a while. Now he was a vent good doctor and he had a very big family. And his wife died here while he was here. So anyway, he left here. But his daughters married into the Marvel family and the Filippini family.

Is that right?

Various children are still here.

Is there good medical care now?

I assume there is, but I have not gone near a doctor for so long—I've never met any of them.

Well that's wonderful—I hope it stays that way, that you don't have to!

I do too.

I know there was a big flood here in Battle Mountain. Can you tell us about that from your experience?

People ask me about the flood and feel sorry for us. I feel that it was so utterly stupid that we *had* a flood! If you were ever in Battle Mountain and saw the country and the water situation, you would think it couldn't be possible. Well anyway, the Reese River flooded the town.

How far away from Battle Mountain is Reese River?

A couple of miles, I guess. In 1910, they had a similar flood, and it flooded the lower part of Battle Mountain down by the Humboldt River, that section. And I have a picture of my husband, as a boy, in a tub, paddling his way up to the railroad track from

his home east of there. In the 1910 flood, the business section and those homes on that side of the track did not get flooded. The depot was on the same side of the railroad tracks as the business section, and the railroad track went around the business section, almost to the river, and followed the river up to Austin, so that everybody knows that railroad tracks are built up, so that that railroad track with its railroad bed was really a dam about four feet high. So the water didn't get over it. Well now, in the meantime, I think it was in the fifties, the man who owned the land near the railroad track decided to take the railroad bed down. The N.C. was discontinued, and so he took the material that was railroad bed, and made a foundation for the Swackhamer store, which is now Ace Hardware. So that left that land flat, and when the water came down the river, it came into the town, just like it went on the other side, because there was no barrier. That's why we flooded in 1962.

What preceded the flood? Was it heavy rains or melted snow? What month of the year was it?

It was in February. But it had rained and frozen and snowed and frozen and rained. And the last rain could not go into the ground because it was frozen and already saturated, so that's why it flooded.

Was that the worst flood that ever occurred here?

Yes.

Can you describe what happened when the town flooded?

I'd better not!

Why?

I was so angry, so disgusted with the commissioners, because we did nothing to stop the water.

Oh my!

The commissioners sat down in the Nevada Hotel. They wanted to get permission from the railroad or the highway or both, to cut a way for the river to go under the railroad tracks and under the highway, so that it would go in its regular bed and wouldn't come in. But they never did get permission.

Oh, they never got around to it? Or didn't want to give the funding for it?

They never got the permission to cut the railroad tracks. Now I maintained that we could have built a dam where this old railroad bed was, and kept it back, because the highway people that were working on Fish Creek sent word down, a half-hour before the flood came, to watch for it, because it was going to flood. So they had that thirty minutes.

They didn't use sandbags?

There was equipment here which would have built a dam with dirt and ties and whatever was available. I'm sure they could have. But anyway, they didn't, and I was a woman and I didn't have any say.

Oh my!

So anyway, we woke up in the morning and our yard was afloat, and there were ties and fifty-gallon oil barrels and all sorts of things going through our yard—came in that way and went out this way. So naturally our basement was flooded.

What about the store?

That first morning I went over to the store, and how I got there was in a boat. I put on Louie's [fishing] waders, and got in this boat at my front door. They brought it in the yard to the front door. And they rowed me over to the store.

A little rowboat?

A rowboat.

And who is "They"?

Men that were working in town, I guess. I've forgotten who.

You went alone to the store?

Yes, because Louie was working here and with other people. I don't know, they were doing lots of other things, and so was Bud. Bud was trying to keep his house. Anyway, I went over there and opened the door so that the water could go in one door and out the other.

Did it get in your store?

Yes.

Did it damage a lot?

It went through the back storeroom—it was deeper in the back storeroom. So it raised everything off the floor. And when [the water] went down, they went down upside down. And so I had a regular mess in the back storeroom. But the front part of the store was never hurt, because it was just on the floor. When the worst of it was over, I put sacks to keep it out.

And I imagine there was no insurance.

No, we didn't have insurance. But the back part of the store, which used to be the coal house—instead of a foundation, it was put up on big rocks, which most of the buildings were, in those days, I guess. So anyway, I carried chunks of coal from the inside out and put them that the water wouldn't pressure the rock, wash them away, so the building minus foundation, would fall and be destroyed. [with emotion] The sheriff was standing across the street, and I remember calling to him, asking him if he would give me his gun so that I could kill [laughter] the commissioners. I said, "All this water here, all this damage, and all they're doing is sitting down there trying to telephone Reno or some silly thing." So of course he didn't, and I couldn't cut across the street anyway, because the water was too swift.

Oh dear!

The water was really swift.

How long did this flooding last?

Oh, it must have been a couple of days. It was a long time.

Did anyone get killed or drowned?

No one was hurt.

No kids got drowned?

No. The biggest part of the water came at night—so I assume that the children were all in the houses, not outside.

Was there a big clean-up crew later?

No. [laughs] The later was sad. People came with big trucks to take whatever was ruined. And they took a whole bunch of stuff out of our basement, which I wish they never...Anyway, they took a lot of stuff I wouldn't have given them. But we had many things in the basement which we wouldn't have had down there, because when Louie's mother and father were living, we were always afraid they might burn the house down. You know, they were older, so we thought things would be safer down there. So we had trunks of pictures and clothes and whatever down there, which we lost. But I remember we went down there to try to save things, and never thinking how high it was going to be, so we put so many things up on shelves that we had, four feet high, and of course they all got wet, because it wasn't high enough.

Oh dear!

It just came to the bottom of our electric box, so that it didn't affect the electricity, which we were afraid of. Now Louie's house was also built up on rocks, like this. All the floors in his house were ruined, because the water had come in and ruined the floors. So he contacted the Small Business Administration, and the man came, and so they sat down to talk about what could be done to fix his house. They told him that he would have to hire an inspector first, and then he would have to hire an architect, and then he would have to hire somebody to do his repairs, and they would loan him the money at a small interest. But he just looked at the man and said, "I'll do it myself" and he did. [chuckles] Because by the time he went through all this and hired all those people, aside from the material, it was a small fortune, and we didn't have that kind of money. So I never asked them for anything after that.

Now how did you have the house and store repaired?

We didn't. We just lived in it. The boxes in our basement are tilted now, so that you kill yourself if you don't look where you're walking. But I have been cleaning flood mud out of the basement until now. There are dishes down there—this summer Jeanne and I went down and brought them up, and the flood mud is terrible, smelly stuff.

Oh, what a shame! Did it create a lot of jobs for these carpenters and architects?

I don't know. The Indian girl that works for me, Doreen, her house was on the edge of town down this way, and it was worse down there, I guess, than anywhere, because it was lower. And they moved her out. Oh, I can talk about moving people out! They moved her out, anyway, down to some of her relatives in Indian Town. When she came back, somebody had raided her house and stolen everything. She had *nothing* left.

So they probably raided other houses too?

They probably did. Anyway, the Red Cross sent trucks from Winnemucca up here to rescue the people where the water was, and took them to the high school. Well my daughter was living in a little house across from the store here, and this truck drove up to the house—she had two little children, babies, really, one of them. And they said, "We're taking you to the high school." And she said, "I don't want to go to the high school." There was no water in her house. She said, "I can't go anywhere." They went around the kitchen of the house and picked up what they thought she needed and put it in baskets and took her and the babies to the high school.

Oh! Did they supply the food?

Oh, there was a lot of canned foods and a lot of stuff taken up there to the high school. I think of all the people with real floods, and real trouble, how wild it must be, because the people that try to help you are more trouble than doing it yourself, I guess. Anyway, these big trucks were around for several days. And they had boards on them like you put on a bumper, only they were about as wide as the side of the tires and about twelve inches high. And they ran up and down Broad Street, which is right past my house here. They just whined up and down just for the fun of it! They were young fellows, and it was a lot of fun to just watch that water flush out. And that was when the water ruined my porch—the cement out there, it about cracked it off. I remember there was a man who lived up the street here, Gus Miller, and he went out with a gun and he was so mad at them he could have killed them if he caught them! Because they sloshed the water clear up 'til it came in his front room windows.

How long did it take to get back to normal after this disaster?

Gosh, I don't know. I think it took forever, because I never got back, anyway. As I said, I can still go in my basement and bring up stuff and wash it.

That's too bad.

Well it was so stupid! I thought it was very stupid to let it flood, when they *knew* that.

They had had a flood before.

Yes, and it had gone around the town because of this dam up there. Why didn't they re-dam it?!

They should make you a commissioner! We didn't discuss the lodge hail yet, and I want to know about that in more detail. Would you start first by describing what that room upstairs looked like where the lodge met?

On the floor there was a very beautiful rug—which I still have and don't know what to do with. The lodge hall must have been thirty feet wide and fifty feet long. They had a raised dais for the matron and patron and those at the head. And then folding chairs which you've never seen, never will again.

Why?

Well, there were four chairs tucked together. I don't know where they came from. My husband bought them from someplace. But they were for people to sit in on the side. Anyway, the heat was a pot-bellied stove, [for] which I carried the coal and the kindling up. Sometimes the men did it, but I did it most of the time. And I cleaned the lodge hall, which was never clean enough for some of the lodge people. In the corner of the lodge hall was a table so that we could serve refreshments. There was no place to cook upstairs, and there was no bathroom. You had to go someplace else. But it was there for many years, and there were a great many lodges.

Now was it the Lemaire's that supplied this hail?

Yes, they rented it. It was built when the store was built. I always figured that A.D. Lemaire must have had visions of the future. And I think that during those first years, people needed a place to just see other people. The only place that there was for congregating was in saloons, [of] which there were many. So I think that he really built this hall so that people could meet. I didn't know the man,

but I think that he did. Anyway, they formed a great many lodges or formed chapters for lodges here. There were the Pithians and the Pithian Sisters, and the Oddfellows and the Masons and the Eastern Star. I think there were ten or twelve different lodges here.

So they all met there, upstairs? They had a schedule?

That was the only hail in town, the only meeting place. And so the elections were held there until—it must have been in the sixties when they moved out. It was the only place to dance. Now, there was a bell that they had at the top of the stairs, going into there, which was used for a fire bell. But if cowboys came to town and wanted to dance, they would go ring the bell, and the women would hear it and go get dressed up and go there to dance.

How remarkable! Now did Mr. Lemaire rent this room to people? Did he let them bring in their own refreshments? How did it work?

He just rented the hall to people, or gave it to them. Probably gave it to them. And of course the lodges furnished their own refreshments. We had parties and dances. Being a lodge member in those days was a place that you enjoyed your friends and people, because you just didn't go to lodge and go home.

I see, it was a social event.

It was a social event.

Was it men and women?

Yes. Well, there was a women's lodge with every men's lodge. And then of course the men always came to the women's lodge. Men could belong to the women's lodge, but

the women can't belong to the men's lodge.
[laughter] It still is that way.

So it sounds like it was busy all the time up there.

It was a very busy place. There were other things.

Are there any pictures of any of the events up in that hall? I hope so.

I suppose people do have. I'll look and see what I have.

Now, someone would have to stay there at night while the lodge was meeting—who would be there?

No, whoever was meeting was given a key and they locked it when they went home.

There was a separate entrance to go up to the lodge?

The stairway is still there. Well, there's another stair, it was a wooden staircase that went up there. Yes, it had nothing to do with the store.

It must have been a little problem with no bathroom?

I suppose it was. I suppose we did without many things that people think they have to have nowadays. But on the other hand, we had many things that they don't have, and never will have.

A lot of houses had outhouses anyway.

Yes. This was probably one of the few houses that had inside [plumbing] because

when they built this house, they drilled wells in the yard, and then had a pump in the basement, which pumped the water, so that there was water upstairs and downstairs, toilets and all. But most of the houses had outhouses when I came here.

Was there a lot of church activity in the early days in Battle Mountain?

Yes. The Lemaire's Store gave the lumber to build the Methodist church here. And Mrs. Marvel gave the bells for all the church the Episcopal church, the Catholic church, and the Methodist church. She gave all those. Mary [Campbell] told me not long ago that the Bible that they use in the Methodist church was one that [with emotion] Uncle Louie gave them years ago.

Was there a lot of social activities around the church as well as the lodges?

Yes, there was a women's auxiliary for all the churches. Ladies' Aid was the Methodist ladies. And the Guild for the Episcopal church. And I really don't know what the Catholics called theirs. Men are called Knights of Columbus, aren't they?

Now did they meet in your lodge room, or at their churches?

No, they didn't meet at the lodge hall, unless they wanted to have a function, and then they would borrow the lodge hall. But I think that most of the time they met at the homes of the women that belonged to them.

I'd like to know a little bit about the fluctuation of the population of Battle Mountain. Do you have any idea how much it varied? What is it now, about?

They say it's 7,000, but I think that takes in the county. Let's see, there were families that came here in the 1800s or the early 1900s, and they stayed. They were the solid background. There were the Hortons and the Mendives and the Marvels and the Jenkinses and the Taylors—oh, so many people.

The Blossoms.

Lemaires. So that basically the population stayed for years and years. If their children grew, they came back home. And they're still doing that. They try their wings at various places and decide that Battle Mountain is a pretty good place to live. I know people used to try to advertise Baffle Mountain to get people to come here, and people used to come in the store and say it's a wonderful place, they're going to live here, they're going to move up here. And I asked them where they were from—they were from Los Angeles. I said, "Well, you're not going to move here. You can just go on, go back." And they just looked at me, "I thought you wanted people here?!" I said, "No, we don't want another Los Angeles. You just stay right where you are." So the town fathers were not very proud of me because I discouraged people from staying here.

Did some of the miners, when they came and worked here, did any of them develop families and stay here?

I guess so. I can't think of any mining families.

Was there a period when the population started to grow more than that early period?

I think it went up and down all the time. Copper Canyon was booming, and then it went down. Then the Betty O'Neal came,

and it went down. And then there was all sorts of little miners around, and they would strike it rich, and then they would go broke. The biggest mine that we had, of course, was Copper Canyon Mine, until they started doing barium. And they said that they find more barium here than anyplace in the world. I don't know whether that is true or not. But you had all that. But after the barium people left—most of them—they said the town was in a slump, but I don't know. The school people would know and the storekeepers would know.

I read that when China started to send barium over, that's what hurt the barium business here in Battle Mountain. Did you hear anything about that?

That's the reason they gave, and it probably was true.

They could sell it so much cheaper.

Well, yes. They had cheaper labor and then they didn't have to pay any of the things that the people in the United States pay.

And they didn't have to pay tax when they shipped it over?

I don't think so. I think it came in free.

You're one who walks about town a lot. Was there a period when you began to not know everybody in town?

Yes. That was during the barium period, when they were here. And now that Echo Bay is in here, there's loads of people that you don't know. Many people say that these people that come in here don't care anything about us, and we shouldn't elect them to offices and so forth and so on—like the BLM.

You were going to tell me more about BLM. We didn't cover that.

Yes. But I have found that many of the new people are *very* nice people. I have many good friends in the new people.

Where did some of them come from, and why?

Most all of them came from Arizona or the Dakotas. The Duval people—they were most all from Arizona. And then the Echo Bay people are from the Dakotas, I think—Canada. That's a Canadian outfit, of course.

A lot of them are staying here? at least through the mining?

Yes, a lot of them stayed—some of them left.

When you taught, did you see a fluctuation of new people coming in? When these workers came, did you get new students for temporary periods?

Not in those early days. We had practically the same children all the time.

You wanted to tell me something about the BLM. We never did get to that.

[laughs] I shouldn't say anything mean about it, should I? Well anyway, when the BLM first started...

When was that?

Oh boy! I imagine it must be in the forties. My husband carpentered on three hous we called them the BLM houses, and that was a BLM beginning. But now they may have had an office someplace else, but I

don't know. But the first offices that I knew of were down by the river, down south of town, which they were in until they just built this big mess up here. But the BLM has grown out of bounds, I think, and so many people do. It just doesn't seem possible that we need the restrictions that they're putting on things, and the amount of people that we're paying to run the thing!

How many people are there?

One hundred sixty-five.

Here?!

Uh-huh.

Really?! In Battle Mountain?!

That's what I'm told—this new place up here has 165 people.

Is that for the whole state?

No.

Is it for the county?

I think they have White Pine and part of Humboldt. I know they have Eureka, they have to go back and forth to Eureka all the time.

Oh, so they have several counties.

But they have their own place in Winnemucca, and then they have their own place in Reno and whatever.

What do they do?

Don't ask me that!

What's their role?

Their role is to see that people do not do the things that we're used to doing. I'll say that.

Kind of monitor?

This last year or two now, they have decided that you can't go out and mine like you used to, and just leave your location hole. You have to leave it like it was when you started.

What's a location hole? [laughter]

You look at the ground and think you have found a place where there might be minerals, so you dig a hole.

Okay, it's like an exploration?

Yes. That may be two feet deep. Nowadays, of course, they use these big drill rigs and drill. But anyway, they have hired rangers now who travel around the country, so that if you pick up an arrowhead, you get arrested. If you pick up a shovelful of dirt, you're also arrested. You have no right to anything. There were some people who went up to the canyon where we used to picnic up to Mill Creek, and they said there was a ranger up on the hill watching them, all the time they were there. And they felt like they were in some kind of prison camp. So they have these rangers. Now, I don't know just what their business is, rather than that. I don't know whether the environmentalists and the BLM are the same people or not, but they are supposed to be watching our environment to keep it in better condition than it has been. So they won't let cattle graze where they used to graze, and I don't now what-all. They've made it so that

you can't run a car on certain roads like we used to in certain places.

Do they post signs so that people know?

Yes, I think so.

When I travel through all the open land, there are areas where there are wire fences with green on it. Does that belong to the Bureau of Land Management? Is it just government land? How do you tell which is private and which is the government land? There are certain fences around.

I don't know. The cattle used to get on the road very badly, between here and Austin. And so the government—maybe the cattle people helped, I don't know—built a fence along. So you see fences along the highway, which are there for no other reason than to keep livestock off [the road]. The fences belong to the government, I guess, or the county or someone.

I read somewhere that 85 percent of the land in Nevada is government-owned land. Is that right?

That's right. But we have always used it as *our* land not done any harm to it, like we go out and get our [arrow] heads on the hills or a shovelful of dirt if we wanted some good dirt to plant in. Or if we thought there were some minerals someplace, we'd dig a hole and find out, and lots of other things. Of course nowadays, you don't do that—you're restricted. It's as if the country didn't belong to us any more.

Do you know what the land is supposed to be for? What the government wants the land [to be used] for?

Yes, they want to keep it for our great-great-grandchildren, so that it will be just the same, as if there was nobody on it until they came.

But there's grazing land, right? Isn't a lot of it grazing land?

Yes, but people used to just pay a nominal amount to graze on government land, but now they've raised the grazing fees, and the ranchers tell you that they're going to quit ranching because they can't afford the fees.

You mean they think they should graze free?

Well not necessarily free. My father went all through this: If you have a cattle ranch and you have 10,000 head of cattle and you expect to have them the next year and the next year and the next year, you're not going to ruin their grazing ground, because you want to use it next year. But the BLM has come along and said that the people who have been running cattle on this ground have ruined it. Now that doesn't make sense, because if you're going to graze this year and leave, I can see where you'd overgraze it. But if you have a farm here and you're going to graze your cattle on this land year after year, you're not going to ruin that land.

Does the food get used up, though?

The feed? Well, no, you just put as many cattle on there as you think that they will be able to run.

But who decides which rancher is going to use that land? In other words, if you have ten, that has ten, this has ten—who decides how to monitor it, if everyone can use the same land? How can they limit and say, "Well I have

10,000, now you have 50,000, that's too much." How do they do that?

I don't know how they figure that out, but say the Marvels have so many cattle they want to put on public land. Then they would pay so much a head for grazing them on public land. And if Filippinis also have cattle, they would mix up in lots of places. But usually people want the grazing land near them, and their farms are far enough apart so that everybody could have some grazing land.

It isn't like the cattle wander all over?

They wander around, but then in the fall you have a roundup and you divide your cattle and find your own brand and take it home. In this part of the country there never was such a thing as a "cattle war." They write books about them, anyway.

Wasn't there controversy with the sheep and the cattle? I've done a lot of interviews where I've heard a lot about the cattle people didn't like the sheep people because the sheep would eat more of the feed than the cattle did.

Well, the sheep eat further down, so they ruin the roots of lots of things.

So I understand there was a conflict there.

The sheep go through here, and come here to be sheared, but I've never heard of any conflict.

Well, in the interviews, I hear this.

Maybe they did, I don't know.

When I question, they say, "Well, the cattle were here first, and then the sheepmen came and the

sheep eat more.” So there was that conflict. I don’t know how they resolved that.

Well, there aren’t any sheep any more, so they don’t need to worry about it.

What happened to the sheep?

They said the price of wool and mutton went down until they couldn’t afford to raise them. Now I don’t know about the wool, but I know a lot of people would eat mutton if they could get it—but you can’t buy a lamb chop to save your life. Why, storekeepers say lamb doesn’t sell, so they don’t stock it.

Well some of the sheepherders I interviewed don’t use the sheep for the food, but they use it for the wool: to sell the ewes and the wool.

When a sheep gets old enough to be a sheep, then you don’t eat it—it tastes muttoney. But you eat the lamb, the year-olds.

They were saying they make more money by not killing them, but getting the ewes and the wool, and then they can re-use and re-use and get more.

I don’t know whether they’re using that much wool nowadays. They don’t shear here any more, as far as I know.

Oh, they don’t shear here any more?

I’ve never seen any.

Was that after the Marvels and Jenkinses sold their ranches and sheep?

Yeah, they used to shear here.

They have pictures that they’re loaning of that. So the Bureau of Land Management—is there conflict with most of the community with them?

I don’t know. I presume that the businesspeople in town like them, because there’s so many of them that buy so many things.

I see.

They would be a benefit to the town in that way. And then they hire some people to work for them.

Local people?

A few, not very many.

I don’t want to move to the commissioners here yet, or Highway 80—that’s so current. What else do you have on an earlier period, before we come to the current?

I don’t have anything but my husband on this, I don’t think. And the fact that Uncle Louie used to go talk to the schools about Indians.

Oh! I did read where one was such an expert and spoke the language so fluently.

Yes. I was talking to one of the women yesterday, and she said how much she enjoyed Uncle Louie when he came to the school with his artifacts.

Oh, tell about that.

He told them Indian stories, and he used to go every year. Of course I used to go to the

schools and talk about various things, but not Indians—I didn't know enough.

Now the Lemaire, I read—and I'd like to find out which Lemaire—were the earliest and best photographers in the area. And I have seen at the University of Nevada, Reno, in their Special Collections photograph section, references to "Lemaire Photos." Who was the photographer?

My husband's father.

That was "Uncle Louie"?

Yes, L.A. Lemaire.

So he was the photographer.

When I first came here, before I had anything to do with the store, he had a whole trunkful of picture backings like those, and picture things in a trunk in the back of the store, but I never knew what happened to it. I don't know what happened to it.

What kind of a camera did he use? Did you see him take pictures?

No, he didn't do any after I came here. I have a camera upstairs—you're not coming back tomorrow, are you?—but anyway, there was one of those slide-out cameras. I imagine that was what he used, or at least at one time he used it. But I have so many cameras from the little cameras to those big slide cameras that I was always going to give to the museum. When we first planned this museum, I wanted a Lemaire room, because I have everything.

Of course, there should be.

They said it was illegal, that I couldn't have it.

Hm, I don't know about that. Were there a lot of pictures in the family now that L.A. Lemaire took?

I don't know. Well, Louis has a lot of snapshots, of course. But I don't know that he took any of these pictures or not—do they have any names on them?

Because I've read about it, and there are a lot of things in the Nevada Historical Society and Special Collections at the University. I've gone through their catalog cards—I haven't looked at the actual pictures yet—and many of them are credited to "Lemaire." So a lot of them must have been given to the university.

Oh for heaven's sake! That's why we don't have any, huh?

Well, they're not the originals. Someone allowed them to have copies.

Well, that's very interesting. I don't think any of us knew anything about that.

You don't have any of those?

My husband might have known. So many of the Lemaire are the type of people that are interested in everything, so they never got to the top in any one thing. He was supposed to be keeping store, and he was doing photography. Of course he was a notary public for years and years: And I was, the years that he was gone. Oh, I know what we were going to talk about! The camels!

That's it! I knew it was some animal! [laughter]

The camel bone yard. In going between here and Midas, Louie and his father went just looking. There's a place out there where they found camel bones in the sand.

Now where was that?

Between here and Midas. I don't know how many miles it was from here. And there's nothing there now. But Uncle Louie, of course, told some people from...What's the big museum in New York City?

The Natural History Museum.

Anyway, it's a big museum in New York City. Somebody had told them, that he had told them, about this thing. They had come out here, and he took them out to see the bone yard. And what they did was come back with tubs and took every bone that they could pick up.

Did they have permission?

No, there was nobody to give them permission.

There was no Bureau of Land Management? [laughter]

No, thank goodness! But all we ever had was a couple of camel bones, which I still have. They're around here someplace. And Louie, my husband, telling about all the bones that they found out there. So they called it the camel bone yard, because they figured that the camels came there and died. You know they brought camels into Nevada to use for work animals.

Oh, I didn't know that!

Most of them were in the southern part of the state. But whether anybody ever used any of them around here, I don't know. You know there's always camel races every year in Virginia City?

No, I didn't know that! Where do they bring the camels from?

I don't know. I don't know whether people own the camels and they're there all the time, or where they get the camels. But anyway, you can go up there and pay to ride a camel. That's a tourist attraction in Virginia City. But now whether camels were used around there for some purpose or not...But as far as he was concerned, I don't think they were ever used here. But there must have been *some* reason why they congregated there to die.

I'll have to do a little research and find out.

Somebody must know.

Isn't that interesting?! I haven't come across it.

Uncle Louie used to make me angry for this reason: He always told where he found all these things. He told everybody, and then they'd come and get it!

Oh gee! Now, when you came into the family, was he still doing exploring with your husband while he was still well?

Yes. We used to go all over.

You'd go with him too?

Most of the time, or sometimes. Sometimes he went alone, but not very often. They were family excursions—the whole family would go.

Did he take his camera?

I don't think we did. Now that was stupid, wasn't it? because we have very few pictures.

Especially since...

EL:... he was a cameraman.

Yeah, and so good. Can you tell me more about your husband?

Louie was born here in Battle Mountain. [with emotion] As a child he spent a great amount of his time on the river. Anyway, he went to grammar school here in Battle Mountain and went to high school in Napa, California, where he stayed with his grandparents. When he came home he took what he thought was post-graduate work here at the high school, because he was going to go to college the next year. What he did was, somebody offered him a job as a hoist engineer at one of the mines, and he was making so much money for that time that he didn't quit and go to college—so he never went to college. He got married instead. So that marriage didn't work out.

Was that a local girl?

Yes, she lived here. He then worked at the store and then in the garage and finally went to Carlin and worked in the shops in Carlin, making and repairing those scooter things [hand cars] they go on the railroad track with. Anyway, when I came here to teach school, that's where he was living. He was living in Carlin. I didn't know him until the second year I was teaching here. Then we went together, more or less, the last year that I was teaching here. And then I went to the State of Washington and taught for a year.

The summer after that first year, we were married in August, and we went back up to Washington. I think perhaps that was my fault that he went, because I wanted him to see that country. It's beautiful up there.

Can we back up a little bit? Tell me about your first meeting. Do you remember when you first met him?

Gosh, no, I don't.

Didn't make a big bang, huh?

No.

How long did you know him before you got engaged?

A year, I guess.

When you started dating, did you know that he was the one for you?

No, I never thought about it. I was much more interested in my work than I was in men at that time.

When did you realize that you loved him enough to get married?

Well, I suppose during the last few months of my teaching here.

Then you took him up to Washington. You mentioned that in our conversation yesterday. Tell me more about him—some of the things we didn't talk about.

Well, speaking of our marriage, we had the two little children. Their first education was to sit on his lap and look at the Monkey Ward [Montgomery Ward] catalog and [National]

Geographic magazine. Anyway, that sounds like an odd educational tool, but it worked. The children were two to four years old, and so before they ever went to school, they knew the difference between talking and reading and could read the names of all the things in the catalogs and all the things in the magazine.

So he was a patient, loving father.

Yes. [with emotion] We were outdoor people. From the time the children could walk, we spent our weekends and Sundays in the outdoors. We either went fishing or camping or picnicking or looking for arrowheads or just walking around.

What lucky kids!

The children seemed to enjoy it as much as we did. They remember that. Before he went to school, Louie was a game warden for a couple of years, and he took Bud with him, so that he spent his summers as a child, covered in dust. He used to come home so dusty you couldn't tell him from the dust, because the cars in those days, the dust came in on you. Of course there weren't any paved roads. During the years, Louie belonged to practically everything I guess. He was a Mason and an Oddfellow, which he belonged to for forty years or so—both lodges. When the Lions Club formed, he joined that. When they formed Fish & Game, he was head of that, and worked with that. He not only did it, but he went out and planted all the different game that are now the population that men come here to hunt and fish for.

He was a leader?

Well, he was a leader in a way, except that he was too retiring to say, "You do this, and you

do that." [chuckles] He either did it, or...He was a fireman for thirty years. He joined that when they first started. He was a past patron of both lodges during this time.

He was a musician too, you said?

Yes.

A fine musician.

Yes, he was.

Did he play in the home? Have a instrument and play anything in your house?

No, we didn't. He played the drums in the orchestra, mostly, and saxophone. Of course we always had a piano. His father used to play. And then when Jeanne grew up, of course she learned to play. She's a good pianist, really good. So she inherited her father's talent. I don't think any of the younger generation are musical at all, as far as I know. He never ran for office. A lot of people you remember because they were this and that. But he said he would never ask anybody to vote for him. Isn't that crazy?!

He was modest?

I guess. He said, "I'm not going to ask anybody to vote for me." They tried to get him to run for office, and he said "Nothing doing. You can have it."

So you had a really good life together, sharing so many interests. He was lucky he had a wife like you to support and enjoy and participate in all those activities.

When I lived in these times, we were fortunate, because we could do so many

things that you can't do any more. And families lived *together* in those days. When my children were little *we* were all together. But families are not *like* that any more.

And I know you took care of your mother and how you and your husband took care of his parents, which you don't see much any more. So tell me a little more about your closeness with families here in Battle Mountain.

Well, my husband was a person that his family came first. [with emotion] If we ever had anybody, like having dinners or anything like that, you invited his family first. That was all the cousins and relatives. But he was never very much for strangers. He never liked any school people—and I don't know why. He just never liked any of them, so we didn't go to very many.

Did you also have very close friends?

Yes, we had quite a few friends. Very often they were people who were on the firemen with him, or on the Lions or something. In that day and age, the women were Lions—we were Lionesses. But I don't think they have them any more. I never hear of them, anyway.

That's a nice name, Lionesses. You were working so hard, did you have time to participate in any of these organizations?

Oh, I was in Eastern Star for years and years and years—matron and all that stuff.

It sounds like you didn't have five minutes of "nothing to do."

To feel sorry for myself in? [laughs] Well, nobody should have any length of time to do nothing in. But of course, there's plenty of

time. This, after all, is over sixty years, and that's a lot of time.

Sure, but you worked so many hours in the store.

Well, that was interesting.

And the library and Red Cross.

I don't ever remember in my life doing anything because I had to. My parents never said, "You have to do this." You just knew that things were to be done, or you wanted to do them. It's very different working because you want to do it, than it is...I don't know the definition for "Work," anyway. What is the definition for work? People work for money or they work to please somebody else, or because they have to. If you work because you want to and you like it, it should have another name.

Yes, you're absolutely right, because that's how I feel.

You're doing something because you like to do it.

That I love, yes.

And I did all the things I did, Louie did all the things he did because he wanted to do it. Of course he worked for wages. But it makes life worthwhile if you're doing what you want to do, rather than what life forces you to do.

It sounds like your husband gave you pretty much leeway to be your own person. Is that true?

Yes, absolutely. We both did.

And you with him.

[laughs] The only problem that we ever had was his smoking. He smoked cigarettes, which was the thing to do when he was a young man. But when we were building—we used to do a lot of building together—we built the garage. We had an old powder house up here out of bricks.

Near the house? Where?

About two blocks from where we live now.

Tell me what a powder house is.

The place where they stored their [blasting] powder for the mines. Anyway, it was a brick building. And the preschool children tore it to pieces. Now can you believe that?! Doesn't that sound silly? But they climbed up on the roof and took off the shingles. And then they went down in and pushed the bricks out. So it was gone, anyway. So we took those bricks and built a fireplace.

Where?

Over at that house where Louie lives. There's 2,300 bricks in our fireplace, and it's beautiful.

You both did that?

Yes. The only problems we had with that, I cleaned most of the bricks, but he wanted to stop and rest. He'd say, "Take five!" and I'd say, "I don't have to take five, I'm not tired." But smoking...was getting him.

What year was that? Or how old was he then?

It was in the forties. He was in his forties.

Oh, way back then? Did you smoke?

I certainly didn't! But anyway, just to go on with the smoking thing: I don't understand why people start it. Of course I never could understand why anybody would start something that was a habit that you had to have. I don't care whether it was candy or bread or whatever. But anyway, this smoking is a very insidious thing. Now Louie first, I think he lost his ability to keep on working for hours at a time without a cigarette. Then it got to his stomach, and he lived on Milk of Magnesia. He was always having Milk of Magnesia. Then he had colitis, and then he had one thing after another.

Did the doctor ever tell him to stop smoking?

No. Then in 1974, he was walking with a cane—couldn't do anything after that. At that time, we sent him to the Elko Hospital. I phoned the doctor and said, "Tell Bud and Louie why he can't walk." They never did.

Did he keep smoking? Even then?

Yes. But nobody ever told him. But we knew it was wrong. I knew it was wrong, and I guess he did too, but you know smokers can't stop.

It's too addictive.

But anyway, he lost his teeth finally and got a sore on his nose and his eye went bad. It affected his heart and his lungs. He finally died of heart trouble.

So you had a difficult time there.

But it's sad what people will do to their bodies. And they'll watch somebody else do it, and *still* do it! That's what amazes me, why anybody that saw a person smoke would want

to do it. Just like kids in cars: they drive fast, one gets killed, but they keep on doing the same thing. So nobody learns from example. But he was a reader: he read everything. Of course he lived with the [*National Geographic*]. I have a lot of his magazines and I'd give anything to find someplace to do with them. I don't think they publish them—maybe they publish them, but we never see them.

What kind of magazines?

On rocks. Oh, what were they called? I have a thousand of them downstairs. But they were all on minerals—beautiful pictures of all the different ones.

Have you tried the mineral building at the University of Nevada-Reno?

No, I never asked them. But then most of the museums and places like that have their own collections, and they don't want any more of his to store. They have so much stuff in their library, nobody reads it.

They don't want it in the library. What about the high schools?

No. Well, they might want these, I don't know. I never tried them. But like *National Geographic* magazines, you can't give them away. I have them way back. And *Reader's Digest*, I thought that...In the library, if I was running a library, I would lay a *Reader's Digest* on the tables, never mention them. And if some child came and wanted to read them, I'd say, "Yes you can take it home and bring it back, or you can keep it." But they don't want to be bothered with anything that's different than their curriculum says.

What about in prisons?

They probably would. But I don't have much patience with prisons.

Maybe if they read, they'd be a little more...

They have such big libraries in prisons nowadays—here they do, anyway. They have a law library for them, and then a regular library and they have all kinds of reading and all kinds of recreation for them. They do a great deal more for prisoners than they do for students.

Is there anything more, before we move away from your husband and your marriage? I know he was also a loving son with his father.

Yes, he took care of his father. [overcome by emotion]

How old was your husband when you got married?

Oh, let's see, I was twenty-seven and he was twenty-nine.

You were close in age. Wasn't that considered, for those days, later than a lot of young people married?

I suppose it was.

But it was sensible.

But he'd been married before.

Did he have children?

No, there were no children. I don't even know how long he was married—I don't know anything about it.

And your teaching filled your life, so you weren't in a hurry to get married.

No, I had no idea of getting married.

Did he coax you to get married?

No, I don't think so—I think it was my fault. [laughing]

It was mutual?

I wanted him to see the Northwest. He'd never been north.

And people didn't travel together unless they were married, right?

Oh no. That would never do. But he did enjoy it up there. He worked for the telephone company a lot of the time, so he was out. And then he went deep-sea fishing and we were right on the Columbia River. We could just look out the window at the Columbia River. The people were so nice up there. The principal of the grammar school lived up in the country. They lived up on the Kalama River, I suppose five or six miles from town. But he raised strawberries and used to bring them to the ice house, the fish house, and have them frozen, so that they had frozen strawberries all winter. And he was always bringing us a thing of strawberries.

How nice!

Then the boys used to take Louie out on fishing trips, and out on their boats and whatever. So it was a real experience for him to be up there. But he wanted to come home.

I was going to say, I want to get back to Lander County too.

To his folks.

You said his family was very important to him.

Very important.

You mentioned big family picnics. Did the family join you on the river when you went camping in the summer on the river? Did a bunch of the family members come?

Aunt Kate and Uncle Louie would just come down on Sundays with the rest of them. But Charles Lemaire, the other cousin, finally made a camp on the river also. He made a camp below ours. But it was never as big as ours—it was just for his own family. But he didn't have the big table and invite people. Of course we didn't necessarily invite them—they just came down, brought their food, and ate.

Well, they must have liked you. Did your kids spend a lot of time with their cousins and relatives?

Now of course the cousins were all my husband's age, those cousins. Charles only had a girl, and the girl was with our Jeanne and Fred. And René had two girls, and one was older and one was younger. August didn't live here—he moved to Reno.

Did your husband's uncles and cousins get together as part of the family? Or which ones were the closest to you and your husband?

Charles and his family, I guess.

When your children were little, were they real close with their grandparents?

Very much.

Did they spend time in the store?

Yes. [laughs] One day I asked Jeanne if she felt that we favored one child rather than the other—you know you often hear that. And she said yes I did. And I was flabbergasted! [laughs] I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, you let Bud drive, and you wouldn’t let me. My father and my grandfather used to let him sit in front of them and drive out to the trash pile.”

I see, and she was too shy to complain?

I don’t know. I don’t really remember her complaining. But we never thought of girls *doing* anything in those days.

Of course.

Nowadays, girls would resent it. The grandparents went with us everywhere, and they almost always ate a meal a day with us over there, and always on Sundays and all holidays. On holidays we’d have August and Rose and the whole bunch.

Did you do most of the cooking? Or did everyone bring a dish?

No, I just cooked the meals. The only thing like that we did was when we had venison or fish or ducks or something. I remember one time some extra people came for dinner, and I said to Louie, “There isn’t enough,” and he said, “I’ll go out and shoot some more ducks.” So he went out and shot two ducks and cleaned them and we had them for dinner.

Oh, how funny! Now, as Jeanne was growing up, did she enjoy helping you in the kitchen? Was it something she enjoyed?

She used to say to me, “Mother, if you leave the kitchen, I’ll clean it up. I’ll do the

dishes,” and she would! It’d be spic-and-span. She said, “I don’t want to help you do it, I want to do it myself.”

See, she took after you there!

Yeah, she did. Now, Bud was always good in this way: he’d come home from school at lunchtime and set the table or see what wasn’t done or something. They were always very good about helping out.

Well you were a good example for them, and probably gave them little chores when they were young?

Oh, they always had things to do. Of course we had chickens and we had a garden, and they had pets which they took care of.

Did Bud start helping in the store when he was a young teenager?

No, during his high school years he worked at the service station in the morning and ran the movie machine at night. We had movies here then.

Oh, what fun!

Those movie machines used to catch fire every once in a while, and I used to be frightened that he...But his never did. He used to say, “If you know how to do it, it won’t happen.”

Now as your children were getting along in their school years—and I’m sure because you were a teacher, you guided them into reading and things—did they develop special areas of interest the way you knew you were going to be a teacher? Did they start developing interests?

I don't think so. Jeanne grew up to be a beautiful woman, she really did.

She looks a lot like her mother.

She was just like a lot of teenagers: she did things that I didn't want her to do.

Like what?

Go to dances, stay out at night, go with boys, and all this stuff.

How old was she when she started doing that?

Sixteen, I guess. They had a very definite curfew here when they were sixteen years old.

You mean in the whole town, or in your home?

No, in the whole town. The kids got off the street [by ten o'clock] when they were [under] sixteen. If they were caught, they were arrested.

What was the curfew, what time?

Ten o' clock.

Was it later on Friday and Saturday night?

It may have been, but it wasn't very late. It might have been eleven o'clock.

Did she obey the curfew?

Yes, and so did Bud. But when he got to be sixteen, then you didn't have to come home.

Oh, okay, when you were past that.

I always remember the night that Louie was sixteen and he took his car. He put cars together until he made his own car in the back yard. Anyway, he took his car and left, and he didn't have to come home. We thought, "Well, we're in for a night of it!" The curfew went off, and fifteen minutes later, Bud came home. We asked him what happened. He said, "Heck, it wasn't any fun, there was nobody out!" [laughter] So we never had to worry about him, because he *could* come home. Because he didn't *have* to, he did. He was never any problem.

Of course with girls it was a little different?

Yes. Her schoolmates in her class were the type of people whose parents let them do anything. They would be at our house at mealtime and I'd say, "Betty, call your mother and tell her you're staying for supper." "I don't need to call her, she doesn't care whether I stay or not." And I said, "Well maybe she doesn't, but I do."

Good for you!

But they were just allowed to go everywhere. When my children were little, I said to the neighbor women who lived around where they played together—they used to play "Kick the Can" under the light post—"Why don't we get together and decide when our children were coming to supper, what nights they could play outside, how late they could stay. If we all five or six of us got together and decided, it would be so much easier than every parent fighting with their children." They said, "You raise your children and I'll raise mine!" which is ridiculous! Because you *don't* raise your children by yourself. Everything that comes in contact with them influences them.

And then they can't say, "Well So-and-So can do it!"

Yes.

Now, when Jeanne was in high school, what were her special areas where she was more talented than other areas? Each child, as we know, develops differently.

I don't know. She was a straight-A" pupil from the first grade on up.

Oh my!

English, I guess, she liked better than anything.

What did she do after high school?

Got married.

Right after high school?!

Uh-huh.

You mean like at seventeen, eighteen?

Eighteen. She wasn't eighteen.

Who did she marry? A local boy?

Uh-huh—one of those romances that I tried to keep her out of.

Who did she marry?

She married Sam Broyles.

Was he as young as she was?

Well, a year or two older.

How long did they go together?

I don't know, I didn't know that they were going together. [laughter]

Oh, in other words it was going on outside of the house?

Yes, he never came to the house. I won't talk about him, because he's still living. He's the grandchildren's father.

How many children did they have?

They had three. They divorced, and then three years later she married this man that she's married to now. You met him the other day.

He seems very nice. Did they have children together?

No, they were older then.

Had he been married?

Yes.

Did he have children?

Yes, they both had families.

Did his children live with them, or with the mother?

When Jeanne and Bob were married, their children were all grown.

Oh, they married much later.

Well, Jeanne and Sam were married for sixteen years.

Oh, that long.

And then there were three years between then and the time Bob and she were married. So I think they've been married some ten years now.

Oh, so she was married a long time to her first husband.

Yeah, sixteen years.

It must have been very hard. Your grandchildren: Where did they live after they were married? Nearby?

They all live in Fallon at the moment.

Where did they live when they married and had the three children?

Oh, Sam and Jeanne? They lived on a ranch up here. When they were first married he worked on ranches, and they lived in a little house here in town.

Different ranches?

Different ranches—mostly for the Marvels, I think, in those days. And then later on he was manager of the T.S. Ranch, where they lived for eight or ten years. I don't know how long they lived there.

Did you get to see your grandkids a lot?

Yes, they used to come to town.

Now let's get over to your son, Louie. I did an interview with him, so we don't have to get too much of his life—I have a real good interview with him. But just from a mother's perspective,

which is always a little bit different: what was he like as he was going through high school?

He tells me, and I hear him telling people stories that I didn't know he was doing. But going places and getting stuck in the mud—I've heard him telling—going swimming and things happened, and I don't know. But anyway, a very easy child to get along with. We never had any trouble with him. Yes we did! I guess I should tell this: he came home drunk one night, and I could have thrown him out of the house! Louie said, "You go out of the house and let Bud and I alone."

Oh that's a good way to treat it!

So anyway, he and Louie settled whatever it was.

How old was he? About sixteen?

He was sixteen or seventeen or something—very young. But anyway, that's the only time I ever knew that we had any trouble with him. He went to college and I went down one day—I don't know on what occasion—but anyway, he took me to lunch. We were at lunch and he told me that he'd met Sally and he was going to marry her. He was a freshman in college, and I said, "Well But, why don't you go with several girls until you find one, instead of marrying the first girl you go with?" He said, "Mother, I'm going to marry Sally!"

I had a son who told me the same thing once!

So that settled it. They have had a wonderful marriage.

Good. And they live close to you, so you see them.

We were across at the store and the phone rang one night and Louie said...We didn't know that he wasn't still running his garage in Sparks—he was running a service station in Sparks. The phone rang and he said, "Mother, we're all loaded, we're coming home."

Oh!

So that house was empty over there, so they just moved in there.

Oh that's wonderful!

And he moved in the store and we went on from there. That was in 1961.

So you've had family real close to you.

Oh yes.

That's one of the interesting things I've found in all the interview as you said earlier this morning, how the children, even if they went away, found that this was the best place for them to live.

They come back, lots of them do come back.

That's an interesting phenomenon in this country.

You take all the Filippini children, third generation, they're all home. And the Marvel family, they're all around here.

Yeah, most of them. I'm gathering from you that even though you loved Washington, that this is home.

Well, I would have lived up there alright, but it wasn't...I guess I've never wanted to do what I couldn't do. You know, a lot of people

make themselves very unhappy because they want to do this so badly...

They'll say, "If I did that..." But you just adjusted with everything in your life.

I guess so.

And you're very strong.

I came back here, and I'd always liked it, because they were always nice to me. So it's silly to want what you can't have.

That's right. And also you did so many things that you knew you wanted to do from an early childhood, and I think that's remarkable.

Certainly did lots of things.

Now, before we move out of those years—before we move into the current time—is there anything more as your children were growing up, and family life before the children went on to their own lives? What was it like when they left the household? Was that when your husband was getting quite ill? Or did you have some years together, alone?

I think he was still working at the power plant when Jeanne got married. And then when Bud graduated two years later, he went to college for a year. Then he was drafted, and so he went to the Army. He never finished college. He went to college under the G.I. Bill a whole year, I think, and then the second year some woman was teaching psychology and she failed him or gave him a low mark, a "D" or something, so that he had to quit. He tried to explain to her that he had a family and he was working, and she said no, he didn't use big enough words in his tests. So she failed him. So he lost his G.I. Bill.

Oh, what a shame.

Stupid, that they'll do things like that, instead of being understanding and finding out the background of the whole thing.

This is June 17, 1993. This is our fourth session, and I'm in Eleanor Lemaire's home.

Eleanor, do you want to tell me a little bit more about your husband's work?

Yes, I think we ought to, because it was a very important period in the history of Battle Mountain. These engines that Louie worked on were the last local engines producing electricity for Battle Mountain. They changed over into the state, as we use it now, after that. But there were three gold dredges. One of them Louie himself moved down from one of the mines up-country here. They were machinery which needed to be babied. They were always breaking down and needing fixing. Louie worked the night shift from five o'clock at night until one o'clock in the morning. And many times he never came home at one o'clock, so I used to go down and find out what happened to him. They usually had an engine all apart on the floor down there, trying to put it back together with new parts or fixed parts. It wasn't a case of just watching engines run—it was a case of redoing them as necessary. They were generators: they generated electricity. So this was in the early 1930s when he worked down there. He worked there for fourteen years. And then they decided to do away with those engines entirely and go into the state that we have at the present time.

Are there photos of those early engines?

I don't know whether there is or not—not that I know of. One day at home, my children came running in from the yard where their father was out working in the garden, and they said, "Oh, Mother, come quick, there's some awful men out there talking to Daddy." [laughter] So I went out and they were three Italian—I'm sure they were, they were foreigners—they looked Italian to me—very large men—and they were trying to persuade him to join the union. What they wanted him to do was to do absolutely nothing for the power company but work on the engines. The men who worked there, including him, used to rake the yard, pull the weeds, paint the building, do the books, do everything that was to be done to keep the business running. And he told them that if he wanted to break the power company he would join their union, but he had no desire to break the power company. He said in no way could they ever afford to hire a man to do each and every different thing—which was perfectly stupid in the first place. So anyway, they left, and my children felt better because they thought their father was safe because [those men] were gone. But he never joined their union. So he kept on doing what he'd always been doing.

Did anyone else join a union? Were there union workers here then?

I suppose. And I don't remember what union that was. He later joined the company union.

Which company?

The power company. He joined the power company union and they promised him that if ever they took him from his job that he was doing here, they would give him another job someplace. That's what unions do. Anyway,

what they offered him was digging post holes up in the Sierras.

You mean when his job ended with them?

Yes.

Oh.

So naturally he didn't go. They knew he *couldn't* go, because he can't leave his family and go up there, and there was no place we would go.

Why did his job end?

I don't remember what excuse they gave, but what really happened in the background was that one of the higher-ups' son or brother or someone wanted the work.

Oh, I see. Is there any other part of his work that you can tell us about? Or his activities—he was such a talented archaeologist, paleontologist.

Well, he never made any money at that, naturally. We never made any money at anything we did. [chuckles] I don't remember just what he did. He probably did storekeeping and mining and stuff for a while after that. I felt very badly.

Over many years, the county seat was in Austin, and Battle Mountain, I understand, had several elections, and then finally in the election of 1980 they voted to move the county seat to Battle Mountain. Were you involved with any of that? Can you tell me some of the things going on? Because I know there was a lot of rivalry and strong feelings on both sides.

No, I wasn't involved in any of it. I think Louie was, though—Bud—I think he was. I'm one of those idiots who see both sides, I guess.

That's what I like to see.

I could see very definitely why Austin would not want to do it. On the other hand, it was pretty stupid to chase back and forth to Austin all the time. On the other hand, Austin still has a courthouse, which we're paying for. So I don't know. I guess it was a good thing. The courthouse system is kind of irritating to the taxpayers, because I feel, and a group of us feel, many of us, that there's definitely more workers than a town this size should have. And the same thing is true of the police department, because we're not bad people. You'd think that we really were putting on riots every morning, with the amount of people that there is working there.

Of course the people in the courthouse work for the whole county—it's not just for Battle Mountain.

Of course the commissioners had to drive from here to Austin every two weeks, but now the commissioner from Austin has to drive back here. So I guess it's better one drives instead of two. I think that there has always been a feeling, as far as county money is concerned, between Austin and Battle Mountain. I think the commissioners and the school district have tried to be very fair, but we have often felt that Austin is getting more than their share—but then maybe Austin people think they're *not* getting their share. So there's always that feeling. Of course there's a good many good friends in both, and it didn't do anything to the friendships, as far as I know.

Good. Then when Highway 80 came in, the roads were paved, cars came in, traffic got heavier. Before 80 by-passed the center of town, was there lots of traffic coming through Front Street?

You know, I was thinking about that. You mentioned that the other day. But I really feel about the only people who would feel a difference would be the restaurants that catered to the truckers. Because other than that, these big trucks didn't buy anything in town, they didn't stop overnight here, they didn't buy any gasoline or anything. But they did stop for a meal.

If there's heavy trucks driving through town, wouldn't that be kind of difficult on your roads and on your living, with all that noise and heavy traffic?

Oh, I don't know anybody noticed the noise, but it probably was much easier on Front Street, not to have that heavy traffic, but we still have an enormous amount of heavy traffic, because the principal part of our heavy traffic is the mining industry here, because they carry their ore through, and their equipment. And the traffic from north-south still comes through town: comes from Idaho down, and comes through town.

Oh, that does? Not on the freeway?

No, it doesn't get at the freeway. Front Street looks just as busy as ever to me, but undoubtedly it does help the maintenance of the highway, and probably the traffic.

I've been driving, of course, 80, coming here frequently, and there's such heavy truck traffic on it, and huge trucks. Sometimes three great big [trucks in a row]. And I just could visualize without 80 how Front Street would be even busier.

Can you visualize driving with two way on one road?

That's the way it was, right?

That's the way it was for years and years. And you just prayed you'd get around somebody before somebody came from the other direction.

So when you still had the store, when your son still had the store, 80 wasn't there. Did any of these people coming through stop to buy things from you?

Oh, the tourists?

The people driving through: it could be workmen or trucks.

Oh, yes, the people did, but the big trucks didn't *dare* stop on Front Street. They didn't dare stop anywhere except on the outskirts, and there were truck stops and restaurants and whatever there. So *they* were the ones that got the trucker trade. The interior of the town never got any, because they wouldn't stop.

When the trains stopped running, how did that affect the town when they finally quit stopping in Battle Mountain for people to get on a4427280197998409nd off? The train was still going, but this no longer became a stop. Isn't that right?

I think it bothered the town mentally more than physically, because the train was so much a part of our living, our lives. And then all of a sudden there was nothing but a whistle going through. But physically...Of course there was all the *convenience* of the trains. They came at certain times and you got your express off of them by yourself, if you could; and you mailed your letters if you wanted to; and you talked to the train people.

They were just part of the community, the train was. And then we had the depot, with all the people that worked there.

Why did the passenger train quit stopping in Battle Mountain?

I think the train people, of course, did that themselves. They did not want Pullman people. They did not want to carry passengers. So they made it just as difficult as possible.

Did you use the train when it stopped here? Did you take the train to travel?

Oh yes. Everybody did that wanted to go anywhere.

So what did they do when it didn't stop? Would they drive to the next train stop?

They probably drove wherever they were going, because by that time, there were more cars and the roads were better.

You were going to tell me about a letter that came from France to Battle Mountain.

It must have been in the late forties, because Uncle Louie was still in the store. Anyway, the Lemaire family, their ancestors were Frenchmen. There was a monk at a monastery at Calais, France, that wrote to Uncle Louie and asked him to send him money because he needed money very badly to run his school. So the Lemaire family sent them money every so often. I don't know if it was every year, whatever it was. Anyway, they hadn't heard from him for quite some years. But one day we got a letter and it was addressed to A.D. Lemaire and Sons, Battle Mountain, USA. And it came directly from

France to us. So we decided that we were the only Battle Mountain in the United States. So I went over to the depot and the conductor over there, Mr. Sneddon, the man running the depot, and I looked through all their railroad directories and we could not find another Battle Mountain. There was Battle everything-else-you-could-think-of, but no Battle Mountain. So I went to the post office and they went through their directories, and there was none. People laugh at me and say that can't be true, there's lots of Battle Mountains—but that was true at that time, because surely they would have been either in the post office or the railroad directories.

Of course! It's a good thing it wasn't addressed to Austin!

Well, we might have got it too.

It could have gone to Texas first! That's interesting.

I had that letter for years, and I hope it's still here. So anyway, Uncle Louie sent him the money.

Anything else about your husband's work or some of his favorite activities?

I've never mentioned this, but it was kind of an interesting thing: Because he couldn't go in the daytime hunting, we got up early in the morning and went to the river and shot a deer and brought it back to the powerhouse.

What time would you get up in the morning to do this?

Oh about five o'clock in the morning, or so, I guess. He brought it there and hung it

up outside and skinned it and cut it up down where he was working.

So he really loved deer hunting, as you did?

Oh yes. And we got so many deer on the river. They were such *good* meat. But when they sold the water to Pershing County for their dam down there, they dammed the water up, where they wanted it to go. So we lost most of our places where the deer would live, because the river went straight through instead of around the bend. And then of course the big ranchers came and whatever, and they blocked it off so you can't hunt the river any more.

I see. So about when did your deer hunting on the river stop?

Well, Louie stopped about 1965, I guess. But of course Bud and all the rest of the family still go deer hunting.

Where do they go?

Up in the hil Mill Creek, Louis Canyon, up over the hill, and then of course they go to Elko County if they can get a doe license. When we used to hunt deer, we could go anywhere we wanted to. But nowadays they have to go in the right section—I think we put that on there.

Do they limit the number you can kill?

Oh yes, you can only kill one nowadays.

Oh, I see, so that they're still reproducing.

There's too many deer.

Too many deer here?

Yes, they die of starvation in the wintertime, heavy snow.

Was it mainly deer that you hunted? Did you hunt any other animals? or birds?

Oh yes, we hunted pheasant and ducks and geese and chukars. I guess that's all. He could shoot anything he shot at

Did you shoot them too?

No, I tried, but...I remember one year we were out hunting and he said, "Now Eleanor you stay there, and I'll go this way. If a deer comes and goes toward you, you shoot it. If it comes to me..." And though I was where I should be, and I heard him shoot, and it never dawned on me that he'd miss. He *never* missed. So I ran to see what he'd shot, and the deer ran right past me, where I should have been.

Oh my! [laughs]

But anyway, he'd hit it in the foot. But he was very cross, because it was a good deer. About the only time I remember him missing anything!

Well, Eleanor, I think that we're going to end this session now. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, we want to thank you so much for sharing your long and fascinating life with us. This is the end of the interview.

ELEANOR MOLLART LEMAIRE
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



ELEANOR LEMAIRE
WITH HANDMADE HOOKED RUG, DECEMBER 1, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Eleanor Mollart (Lemaire), 1925 (23 years old).
Graduation, University of Nevada, Reno in front of Manzanita Hall.

(Original photograph owned by Eleanor Lemaire)



Front row, far left, Miss Mollart (Eleanor Lemaire), teacher, Lander High School.
Group deciding to put the letters "BM" on the hill.

(Original photograph owned by Eleanor Lemaire)



Miss Mollart (Eleanor Lemaire), teacher Lander High School, 1927 (front, left).

(Original photograph owned by Eleanor Lemaire)

ELEANOR MOLLART LEMAIRE

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

LOUIS MOLLART LEMAIRE**PREFACE**

Louis Mollart Lemaire's great-grandfather, Auguste Desire' Lemaire, born in Calais, France, emigrated to the United States in 1859. He spent some time in Canada, traveled to California attracted by the gold mining and married Marie Louise Lucas in 1869. After the gold started to run out in the Sierras, Auguste, Marie and their three sons came to Battle Mountain in 1876 and were among the earliest settlers of the town. He got involved with the mining that was starting in Battle Mountain. Later they founded the firm of A. D. Lemaire and Sons, Inc., a general mercantile store. As his sons grew up, they worked with him and developed a very successful business.

Grandfather Louis Aime' Lemaire married Kate Heflin, a schoolteacher who was teaching at a mining camp ten miles east of Battle Mountain. Louis describes his grandfather wearing a suit, vest and tie every day in the store and teaching him French when they ate lunch together. His father was sent to high school in Napa, California then returned to

Battle Mountain and started working in the local mines. His mother, Eleanor Mollart, was born in a mining camp in Colorado. The family moved to Southern Nevada to work in a mine there. Eleanor graduated from the University of Nevada with a degree in economics, then moved to Battle Mountain to teach. She and his father met and married in 1929, and lived at some mining camps with their two young children, Louis Mollart and Eleanor Jeanne, where their father was a placer miner. When his sister was ready to go to school, they moved back and settled in Battle Mountain.

Louis describes life filled with outdoor recreation. Summers were spent camping on the Humboldt River with several families, wearing bathing suits almost the entire summer, swimming in the river, fishing, and rowing in their wooden boat. He started to work summers in a service station when he was twelve and always worked weekends too. After school he worked at the Lemaire store, hauling wood and coal upstairs to the lodge ball above the store and sweeping the carpet.

He and sister always had chores in their home, too. Some of his duties were to keep the coal box filled, chop kindling and mow the lawns. When he was in high school, he ran the movie projectors in town every night.

As Louis' grandparents were getting older, his parents took over the store, and after college, marriage to Salle Anne Jolly, and military service, Louis, his wife and three children moved back to Battle Mountain so he could join his parents in the Lemaire store where he worked the next twenty years. Their family increased to six children. He describes the changes in the town and their business during those years. Louis went into the insurance business in 1979 and the Lemaire store was sold in 1981.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Louis Mollart Lemaire at his home, at 215 South Broad Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on March 19, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Lemaire. Would you please tell us your name, your birth date, and where you were born?

Louis Lemaire: My name is Louis Mollart Lemaire. My birth date is July 24, 1933, and I was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada.

Would you please tell us the names of your parents and where they were born?

My father's name was Louis Everett Lemaire. He was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada, [May 18], 1900. My mother's name was Eleanor Mollart, and she was born in Aspen, Colorado, [June 1], 1903.

Would you tell us about just the statistics: your grandparents' names and where they were born? And then we'll move on to get more about them.

My grandfather's name was Louis Lemaire, and my grandmother's name was Kate Heflin. My grandfather was born in North Bloomfield, California, and my grandmother was born in a town in Missouri that I'm not sure.

Whatever research I did on Lander County, the Lemaire family was always prominent in it. Can you tell us, is it your great-grandparents that first came to this region?

Yes, it was. My great-grandfather [Auguste Desiré Lemaire] originally came here and after he was established in the town of Battle Mountain he went back to North Bloomfield where he married my great-grandmother, and then together they moved to Battle Mountain and established the business now known as "Lemaire's Store."

Well, what I'm curious about, and many others who will be looking at your interview: Where were your grandparents born?

My great-grandfather was born in Pas de Calais, France [February 6, 1839]. My great-grandmother [Marie Louise Lucas] was born in what is now known as New Iberia in Louisiana [January 26, 1852].

First I'm going to go to your grandmother. She must have had her original parents coming from another country?

Yes, I really don't know too much about my grandmother's family. When she moved out West, a brother came with her and he was

killed in World War I, and so my grandmother was the only one in the family, and I really don't know much more about it.

Well let's move on to your great-grandfather. One of the things that is fascinating to everyone studying the development of towns and cities all over this country is where people emigrated from. Can you tell us what brought your great-grandfather to this country, and coming to this kind of isolated spot of Battle Mountain, which must have been really much, much smaller then—how did they get to Battle Mountain?

Well, my great-grandfather, I really don't know why he immigrated to the United States, but he did come to Canada originally. Then from Canada he came down to Panama. He couldn't afford the cost of the ship to go around South America, so he *walked* across the Isthmus of Panama and caught the boat on the other side and came up to San Francisco. From there, he, like many others during that time, got into gold mining in the Sierras and that's why he was living in North Bloomfield at that time. That was a gold-mining area. And after the gold started to run out and the difficult winters of the Sierras, he, with some of his friends, moved toward Winnemucca and the friends built what is now known as the French Ditch. Then he came to Battle Mountain to be involved in the mining that was starting in Battle Mountain in those days.

Do you know how old your great-grandfather was when he took that adventurous journey to come to this country? and that really difficult walk and travel to get up this way?

When my great-grandfather left France to come to Canada, he was only twenty years old. It was some ten years later before he finally

migrated to the town of Battle Mountain, so he was thirty at that time.

Did he come alone on this journey when he first came to this country?

He probably had friends with him from France. I think his brother-in-law was with him during that journey: his name was Louis Aime.

Were the family miners or ranchers back in France?

I really don't know much about the history back in France. We have traced our family tree back as far as my great-great-grandfather, who was a soldier in Napoleon's army, but I don't know about my great-grandfather and what his family might have been doing in France before they left.

When he first came to Battle Mountain, you said he started a business here? I want you to tell me what you can of the development of that.

Well I think when they first came here he was involved in the mining activity. Then later on, started to build a store, which was known as A.D. Lemaire and Sons, Incorporated, and it was a general mercantile store. His sons worked in the store with him and developed an excellent business, and it was one of the few businesses of its type in town. And so they sold everything from liquor to clothes to groceries, coal, wood—just about everything there was.

I read it was one of the very first stores, wasn't it? Now, I want to back up a little bit, because you said "Lemaire and Sons," so we have to get him married first. [chuckles] I know you said he went back. Tell me about how he met your

great-grandmother, and about their marriage and establishing their home here.

I really don't know much about how he met my great-grandmother, except that he went back to North Bloomfield to marry her when he came out here. And I don't know whether she came over by herself, and also her family established themselves there or not. But he was in Battle Mountain and then went back to North Bloomfield to marry her, and then brought her out here.

And when were their two sons born, and what were their names?

Great-grandfather and great-grandmother were married June 28, 1869 in North Bloomfield, and they had three sons and one daughter. The information on them is in the family tree.

And I will add that to the transcript. Now I want to learn about your grandparents. First, tell me your earliest recollections, the name of your grandfather and as much as you can tell me about him and his marriage later to your grandmother.

My grandfather's name was Louis Aimé Lemaire, and Aimé in French means "beloved." He was born in North Bloomfield but came to Battle Mountain at about age three. And he, along with his brothers, helped his father in the store business. Later on, he bought a band of sheep and went into the sheep business, which caused some family problems because in those days there was a war between the ranchers and the sheep owners, due to grazing in the hills. So due to pressure from my great-grandfather, he finally sold his band of sheep and went to work in the store, and continued in the store

until he was unable to work any longer. My grandmother was born in a town called Maryville in Missouri and moved out here at a young age as a schoolteacher. She taught school at some of the ranches in the area and some of the very small schoolhouses, and eventually at a mining camp called Louis Canyon, which is about ten miles east of Battle Mountain. It was at that time that she and my grandfather met and eventually they married.

Fascinating, because that's such an early period for women to be teaching, so she must have been an adventurous woman to come out to these mining towns. Did she come alone, or with any family members? Do you know anything more about that?

She did come with some family members, but I don't recall just what family members she came with, other than her brother. Schoolteachers in those days didn't have to have the credentials that they do now, and at seventeen years old, she was qualified to teach children in school.

That's fascinating. In my research on Battle Mountain, of course the Lemaire family name was prominent in everything that I touched, and I did read that the Lemaire were leading photographers and that many early photographs of this region say, "Lemaire, Battle Mountain." Can you tell me who that was?

I'm pretty sure that was my grandfather, Louis Aimé Lemaire. He was very active as a photographer, and there are numerous pictures available that he took in the early days.

Do you know if any are in any of the archives where they're available, like at the university or historical society at Reno?

I'm sure that there are numerous pictures that are available in the archives that he has taken.

I want to go back to your grandfather who started the sheep raising, and there was controversy about that. I want to learn more about it. Were your family Basques?

No, they weren't Basques. They were from France, but they didn't have any family members that were from the Pyrénées or that region where the French Basques were. It was an activity I guess my grandfather decided to get into, and I don't really know why. But because my great-grandfather had the grocery store and sold to many of the ranchers in the area, it caused quite a conflict, due to my grandfather running sheep in the area.

Was it because the sheep would eat the same foods on the grazing lands? I'm not that familiar.

Sheep and cattle normally eat the same type foods on the grazing lands, but sheep eat right down to the ground, so once a band of sheep has gone through an area, there is no grass left for the cattle to eat, and that's why the problem there was.

But I understand there were a lot of Basques that did raise sheep. Did they have special areas? Or was there always a conflict in that period?

Well, there weren't really any Basque families that had sheep here. They were used to the lonely life and herding sheep in the Basque country, and so they were imported into this country to be sheepherders.

That's information I wanted, because I wondered how people so far away learned

about it. Who got word over to them to let them know that there was work here, and did they pay their way over?

I'm not sure how the first Basques came to this country, but I'm sure their way was paid for them to come. There were big companies like W.T. Jenkins Company at that time that had thousands of sheep, many bands of sheep, and they needed several herders. They would bring these young men from the Basque country over and they would work for several years and then they would go back to their homeland quite wealthy with the living scale that they have over there.

Then did the Jenkins own the land? Was it their own ranches so it didn't interfere with the cattle raising?

They owned some of the land, but they used what is now known as the federal land as well. In those days, the Bureau of Land Management wasn't established to have any guidelines, and was pretty much whatever land that you staked out and called your own for grazing purposes, they used. There wasn't that much conflict with other ranchers at the time.

Was there controversy about the Jenkins' holdings and their sheep business?

Not really. One of the brothers in the Marvel family—the mother was a Jenkins—pretty much took care of all the sheep in his family, and the other two brothers, Tom and John, took care of the cattle. There may have been some conflict in her family, but they did run an awful lot of sheep, and to my knowledge, there was not real problems with it.

Sounds like “all in the family.” Tell me about the other members of the family besides your grandfather: Were they all working in the store?

I think they all were. Originally, to my knowledge, they all did. My grandfather’s brother August, another brother Ernest, and another brother Henry, were all part of the store business. And at that time, the business was very large, and it took that many people to take care of it.

Was the Lemaire family store and the Swackhamer store—I think they had one early—were they the two that handled this whole area?

Yes, they did. The Swackhamers originally started their store at one of the mining camps. I think it was a little town called Lander. And then they eventually moved down to Battle Mountain when the mining camp closed up, and established a store here. But that was somewhat later than the Lemaire store.

Did your grandparents tell you anything about what Battle Mountain was like in that very early period? Anything about population or anything about what it was like that you can remember?

I don’t remember very much about the population. Of course I was born and raised in Battle Mountain myself, and the town was about 500-800 people in those days, so the population was not too large. It was a rail center and a center for mining activities here. As far as the social life was concerned, I think it was primarily lodges in those days: the Masonic Lodge, the Odd Fellows Lodge, the Rebecca Lodge, the Eastern Star. That was a big part of the social life of the community.

And were there also church activities?

Yes, there were. There were several church a Baptist church, Methodist church, the Catholic church. Probably not as many churches as there are now, but they were very active too.

Do you have anything more to tell me about your grandparents before we move on, more current, to your parents?

Only that my grandfather and grandmother were very social-type people. I don’t know how to describe them other than very dignified. My grandfather wore a suit to work every day. I can remember even in later years he always wore a tie and a suit and a vest. And it didn’t matter what kind of a dirty job that he was doing, that was his “Work uniform.” They entertained people at their home. My grandfather could speak French, and he tried to teach me French when I ate lunch with him as a child.

Can you tell me now about your parents—a little bit more about them and how they met?

My father was born in Battle Mountain and attended grammar school here, and then attended high school in Napa, California. We had relatives living in Napa at the time that had some vineyards. I guess my grandparents thought he would get a better education in an area like that, so he attended four years of Napa High School, and then came back to Battle Mountain. He had the opportunity to go on to college, or education higher than high school, but wound up having a job in one of the local mines and was making excellent money and his parents couldn’t convince him to go on to school, so he never did attend college. He worked in mines most of his early life and finally when my sister

was born, decided that maybe he'd better have a steady income, so he went to work for Sierra Pacific Power Company here locally so he'd have a monthly paycheck coming in.

Let's back up a little bit, because I want to hear how he met his wife and about getting married—before these sons—and then if they lived at Battle Mountain all the time. Tell me about your mother, too, please.

My mother was born in a mining camp in Aspen, Colorado, and moved to Southern Nevada when she was three years old. And then from there they moved to a little town called Buckskin between Smith Valley and Yerington. Her father was a miner also, and after they worked in a mine there for a while, he established a little store as well. And while they were running the store they built a ranch in Smith Valley.

You're saying "they." Were they married by now? Who is "they"?

This was my grandfather and grandmother that built the ranch. My mother was raised on the ranch with her brothers. She went to high school in Yerington and graduated from the University of Nevada with a degree in home economics. She then moved to Battle Mountain to teach home ec. [economics], and that is where she and my father met and were married.

The men in your family like teachers, I can see! Now, when they married, tell me where did they live, and then about you and your sister, when you were born, and about that early part of the family.

When they were married, my mother continued to teach in Battle Mountain for

about a year, and then they moved to Kalama, Washington, where she taught for two years. And during the time that she was teaching up there, I think my father just had odd jobs and spent most of his time fishing—at least that's what it sounded like when he talks about his experiences up there. I think they enjoyed themselves immensely in that part of the country. Then they moved back to Battle Mountain again, where my mother was still teaching and my father did some more mining. At some period in those times, we did live at some of the early-day mining camps: I know we lived in Austin for a while and out at Copper Basin where my father was a placer miner. But then as I've said, eventually when my sister was ready to go to school, why, we moved back into the town of Battle Mountain.

It was very unusual for women to continue teaching after they married—in fact, in many parts of the country, married women couldn't teach, so that this was a unique situation, wasn't it?

Well, I really don't know, because I wasn't aware of that. I know that a lot of young teachers that moved to this area boarded with my grandparents in Battle Mountain while they were teaching here. There are two or three of them that married and that are still living in Battle Mountain.

So your father was one of the "modern men," because today, of course, so many women with careers, the husband goes where the wife is working. That was an unusual situation. Did your mother talk much about that? That sounds quite adventuresome for that period.

It probably was adventuresome. They talked about the old automobile that they had and the trip that they took, which took many

days, in those days, to accomplish, and what now would only take a couple of days with our modern automobiles and highways.

Are you older, or your sister?

My sister.

Your sister is older. Would you tell me again, where both of you were born?

Both of us—my sister and I—were born here in Battle Mountain. The hospital does not exist now. In fact, the hospital presently is the third hospital that was here in Battle Mountain.

Now I want you to go back to your earliest recollections of your childhood. Just going back to what daily life was in your family, and as you then started in elementary school, would you tell me just what you can remember?

We had a good life as young children, and of course our recreation in those days was the outdoors. I can remember when my dad was placer mining and we would do our own little placering at the time, taking water and trying to pan for gold and see if we could find some flakes and get all excited when we *did* find some. But our recreation in the summertime was the Humboldt River. When we were children, my mother and father packed up the tents and the stove and we all moved to the Humboldt River and spent about two months on the river every summer. My father commuted back and forth to town to work every morning. When he would come in the evening he would bring whatever groceries we needed, and we had lots of company, and we had lots of tents, and kids would come out and stay with us and spend a few days.

That sounds wonderful! Did other families do that too?

Yes, the recreation for most of the families in Battle Mountain in those days was the Humboldt River, and there were two or three major camps where large families spent their time. The Altenburg family had a great camp at Argenta, and we would spend some time with them as well. That was the recreation. We skated on the Humboldt River in the wintertime and swam in the Humboldt River in the summertime.

That sounds wonderful. Was that the Altenburg family? I found a little manuscript that you wrote in your high school days where you wrote about Mrs. Astella Altenburg, and I brought you a copy. Is there a relationship to the family, or just friends?

There is a relationship in the families. Astella Altenburg's son was married to a cousin, Grace, who was Adelle Lemaire Blossom's daughter. So we were related by marriage.

Now back to those camps—because it's hard for me to visualize it—when you said “there were camps,” were there certain places where it was designated for camps, or you just found places that were ideal for it, when you said “there were camps”?

There were places that were just picked out for a camp, and of course there was private ownership of all the property along the river in those days as well, so it was with the permission of the property owners that we were able to do this. Certain locations were picked out. The willows in those days were much more thick, and much larger: in fact, there's places now where they've all been

killed. But camps were cut out of the willows and tents were erected. Each year we'd go back to the same place and set up the camp again.

I hope we can find pictures of that. That sounds fascinating. Also, since it was on private property, was there water? were there bathroom facilities? were there laundry facilities? I mean, at least a place you could hang clothes? Tell me about that.

No, there weren't any bathroom facilities or laundry facilities. We made our own little bathrooms back in the willows. And the laundry facilities, if you didn't wash it in town and bring it back out, you just washed it in the river with a little soap. There weren't very many clothes to wash. Normally, at least my sister and I wore bathing suits almost the entire summer, and so we didn't have too many clothes to wash! [chuckles]

It sounds wonderful! About how many young people and families were there that you were interacting with?

Oh, there was probably twenty or thirty families that would visit on and off that had young people our age and some a little older. We had a wooden boat that my father had made that we all took turns rowing up and down the river and diving from and so forth. And of course there were catfish and carp and some trout in the river that we would fish at the same time too.

How old were you when you remember starting this camp activity? and for how many years did your family do this?

As I remember, we were just about starting school age, possibly a little under school age, and then it probably lasted until

my sister and I were twelve or fourteen years old, until we were probably young high school age. Then for some reason or other, I can't remember why, we just discontinued these type things. It could have been the sale of the property involved, or possibly the camps got washed out, or maybe the willows burned or something. But anyhow, it was just discontinued.

And maybe you had other things to do in the summer?

Probably did. When we got to that age, it was an age where we had to work a little bit in the summertime—at least I did. Usually had a summer job in a service station or something and just didn't have time for those kind of activities any more.

Were you one of the 85 percent of the high school boys that I read worked for the Jenkins family during summers?

Yeah, I'm sure I was. I did work for the Jenkins family at one time. They were the type of family that helped the local boys by hiring them to do their haying and so forth in the summertime. I'm sure it was advantageous to them as well, but they were very generous in having these jobs available to the young people.

Do you remember how many hours you worked and about how much pay you got per hour?

Well I remember the first job in a service station I had when I was twelve years old. That was my first Social Security card. I was making fifty cents an hour at the time. I remember after I had accumulated two or three paychecks, I bought a beautiful new Schwinn bicycle with it, that I had at least until

I was in high school. Even though I didn't ride it in those days, I still had it.

That's wonderful. Now tell me about your early school days.

I started in the building that is presently being used as the courthouse. It was the grammar school then and housed grades one through eight. My first-grade teacher was Eliza Pierce who later on, a school was named after her. She taught two grades at the same time: first and second. Then we went into the third and fourth grade that was taught by Mrs. Rose, who was the mother of Dale Rose, and he married my cousin Grace Blossom. Then in the fifth and sixth grade we had Gaynell Mendive: she taught two classes as well. Then the seventh-grade class apparently was a little larger because they had a teacher named Mrs. Bartlett that taught the seventh grade by itself. And then in the eighth grade, when I was there the principal of the school, Mary S. Black, was the eighth-grade teacher, and there again we have a school in Battle Mountain named after Miss Black.

Now I want to go back and hear a little more detail about your school days: For instance, how many students would be in your classes in elementary, and as you moved along? Did the Indians go to the same classes? How did they keep pace with teaching the students of different levels? Whatever you can remember. Let's stick first with the subjects that you studied and homework.

Well, the classes probably were relatively small, especially in the rooms where the teacher was conducting two grades at the same time. The best recollection I have, there were probably about fourteen in two classes. And I think we were integrated with the Indians and

whatever minority groups there might have been. In fact, my class I think had five Indians in it. They were very popular in those days, and we had no problems at all as far as in our social activities. I think the way that the students were handled was that there were rulers and pointers that were used to physically keep us in line, and I think I have never been against that at all. [chuckles] My best recollections are, I got out of line a few times and was controlled very easily by the teacher in charge, and I'm sure that's how she was able to take care of two classes at the same time.

In your elementary school days, did they have a recess? And if so, what did you do during that little break in your classes?

Yeah, they did have a recess, twice a day, if I remember correctly. We were formed up in lines and marched out of the building to the recess, and then formed another line and were marched back in again. We played outdoors, had recreation equipment very similar to what they have now: swings and teeter-totters and baskets to play basketball and so forth. So it's very much like it is now.

Did you bring your lunch?

No, primarily because I only lived a block away from the school [chuckles] and so it was easy for me to come home. But during World War II they had the hot lunch program. There again, my mother wasn't teaching for a few of those years, and she was in charge of the hot lunch program. So meals were cooked every day at noon for all the students in the school. I always remember they had sauerkraut and weinies on one of those days, and you could always tell it because the whole school would smell like sauerkraut. And I don't think I've eaten sauerkraut since! [laughing]

That's wonderful! Did they have junior high?

No, there wasn't a junior high: It was classes one through eight in the grammar school, and then the upper four classes were in the high school itself. The high school that I went to has been torn down and the hospital built on the location where the high school was.

When you started high school, did you stay in one class, or did you have different teachers for different subjects?

In high school we had different teachers for different subjects. It was a little bit different than grammar school. Sometimes we would change rooms, and at other times the teachers would just come into the room that we were in, so we would change teachers. There was about five different classrooms in high school.

When you were starting high school, did you start to develop any specific areas of interest in the subjects you were taking that led you to think about what you might want to do?

No, I really didn't. In fact, I have *never* really known what I wanted to do! [chuckles] I think my favorite subject in high school was geometry. I enjoyed drawing and had excellent grades in geometry, but classes like English and those-type classes, I had difficulty with. I really wasn't interested in them.

Did they give you a lot of homework?

I don't remember that homework was a problem. I remember [teachers] assigning a lot of homework. Well at least I graduated, so I guess I must have done *part* of it—enough to get by, anyhow. But I wasn't that interested in the curriculum at schools.

What were your interests as you were getting into teen years? not school, but did you have any really passionate interests?

I didn't have any passionate interests. I was interested in all kinds of sports activities. I participated in football and in softball and track and basketball. And of course it was mandatory that you keep a "C" grade or better in school to participate in the interscholastic activities. And I think that's a program that they still carry on, and I think it's great, because there was some point that you knew that you could not participate unless you got good grades. When you're not that interested in school, sometimes that was a big help.

Yeah, that's a great incentive. Tell me about the social life during your teen years—at school and outside of school. I'm sure by then the fellows and girls were starting to get interested in each other. Tell me the kinds of activities, whether there were dances or socials.

Yes, we had an active social life in school. In fact, we had Tuesday Night Socials where one of the teachers made themselves available each Tuesday night. We had records and a phonograph and one of the rooms available at school so we could go up and dance and have punch and enjoy ourselves. There were four main dances that were given by each of the classes in high school. And in those days, when you put on a sophomore hop or a junior prom or whatever, the entire town was invited to the dance. So you had an interaction between the students and the townspeople as well, and you danced with your mother and father and whoever else was there.

I never heard that from anyone! I think that's wonderful! You'd never see it today. Children would probably shun their parents even being

in the room! Now I want to move away a little bit from that, and as a young person growing up, what kind of observations, or were you aware of the changes in the town, or things that you can tell me about the growth of the town in that early period before you got out of high school? Were there things happening as roads were being built or new people coming in?

I don't recall anything of any significance happening during my high school years. Mining activity was fairly strong here. The Copper Canyon Mine, where some of the students and their families lived, was about twelve miles south, and they were bused back and forth to school. And then a dredge called the Natomas Dredge was brought out in a location very close to Copper Canyon, and that employed several. But in those days, the school bus was owned by an individual, and they would take a shift of miners out to work and pick up the students and bring them in to school. And then in the afternoon they would take the students back out and bring the miners back in.

So that meant that those students didn't interact in your social life after school? Or did some stay?

They pretty much stayed in town with some of their friends. I can't think of too many occasions that they may have missed—especially on weekends. So whoever had a friend that was living out of town usually had guests for the weekend if there was an activity.

Was it kind of fun when new kids came in from camp to expand the available peer group?

Yes, a new student was always looked over pretty well. Well, kids can be cruel too, so they were sized up pretty well and either accepted

or rejected. But there was always some group that they were accepted in. [chuckles]

One of the things I've observed—I come from the border of Mexico, so we have many Mexicans and Mexican-Americans—but I'm wondering about the population here: Were there Mexicans or Mexican-Americans in your classroom? Did they come that early?

Yes, there were a few—not many Mexicans in those days, but there were a few. Some of those families were here because of maintenance on the railroad. There were a lot of section workers that were of Mexican descent. And then a few more later on came up to work on the ranches. But nowadays with all the mining activity and the immigration of many more, there's a lot more Mexican families now.

Do they come over from Northern California? or do you have any idea how they learn about the activities up in this Battle Mountain area?

I really don't know how they know about it. It seems that when one member of the family finds out about it and establishes themselves, they bring all the rest of the family!

That sounds like the same with people who come from other countries, where someone comes and then sends for them. I know that young people, when you were growing up, especially in a rural area like this, didn't have as much recreation time as children and young people do today. Tell me from your earliest recollections up through high school, the kinds of chores both in the home, in your family store, and outside, as much as you can remember.

There was always chores for most all of the young people around the home. The

heat in our home was based upon the coal stoves, and so even as a very small child it was my duty to keep the coal box filled and chop kindling and keep it in the house so that there was always available kindling and coal for the stove. Of course your job was to mow the lawns and try to help as much as you could. My mother had a washing machine that had to have some tubs on the outside. And I remember helping her pour the water out of the tubs and put the bluing in it for the Levis and whatever. But those were usually Saturday chores. I remember being happy when I had a job on Saturday so I wouldn't have to go through that! But I always kept myself busy, and it seemed like I had a job from my earliest recollections. At one of the old hospitals, I used to, after school, empty all the garbage cans and take the clinkers out of the furnace that were caused from the coal. And I hauled the wood and the coal upstairs to the lodge hall that was above Lemaire's store for years. It was my job to sweep the carpet. Then I worked in the service stations on weekends. And then finally, in high school I had one of the better jobs in town: I ran the movie projectors. That was at a time when all my friends were into movies anyhow, so it was two hours a night and it paid very well and kept my automobile in gasoline and tires and whatever.

And you got to see the movies free!

Movies free! [laughs]

There's no movie theater here now!

No, there isn't. The movie theater, unfortunately, was frame and had a floor that was unsupported by a good concrete foundation, and after many years of abuse and an awful lot of dances...All the dances were held in the theater. The floor was flat

and of hardwood, and the seats were all removed. The big dance of the year was the Firemen's Ball, and they brought in an outside orchestra—a very expensive orchestra—and the dances were packed. It was the occasion of the year.

Let's go back into your household. Were your sister's chores, women and girls' chores? helping Mama with cooking and laundry? or what did she do?

I believe my sister's chores were, yes, helping my mother in different ways: setting the table, washing the dishes, that type of thing. I know that we probably couldn't have handled chores together because we'd probably fight with each other if we did, and that would cause some problems. [chuckles] She kind of did different things around the home than what I did.

Did you have a lot of socials in your home, or interaction with families coming over to Sunday or holiday dinners?

Yes, we did. We had families on Thanksgiving and on Christmas, but as was our custom in our family, we had Christmas dinner at my grandparents house, which is just across the alley from where our house is now. And while we were eating Christmas dinner, Santa Claus made his visit to *our* home, and we opened the presents on Christmas Eve in those days, instead of Christmas morning.

How old were you when your grandfather died and when your grandmother died?

My grandfather died in 1958. At that time I was probably about twenty-six years old. I was married and living in Reno. And my grandmother died a few years later in 1967 or

1968, and I was living here in Battle Mountain at that time.

So you have strong recollections of your grandparents as you were growing up. Tell me a little bit more about what grandparent-grandchildren relationships were then, and what their life moved on to as others took over the store. Or did your grandfather work for many years into his older age?

I had an excellent relationship with my grandparents. As I've said, my grandfather was very much the gentleman, and I really can't ever recall him using a cuss word. He was a jokester and loved to tell jokes. I guess I ate lunch with him when I was going to school quite often, because my mother was busy, and my father was busy as well. He taught me how to drive an automobile. He had an old Model A Ford and on Sundays I would work very hard with him cleaning up the yard so I got to go to the dump, and I got to drive the car to the dump and drive back again.

How old were you when he let you drive?

I think I was about twelve years old. In those days, although there were rules and there were drivers' licenses available and so forth, it was a small community, and I think I had my own car—a Model T Ford—when I was fourteen. That was probably about two years before I could even get a driver's license.

That's wonderful. And tell me about your relationship with your grandmother.

My grandmother, again, she was an excellent cook. And of course her hot apple pies were famous throughout the community. She always fixed lunch for us and fixed supper. And one of those-type cooks that never had

a recipe or never used one: it was always a pinch of this and a pinch of that, as they did in those days. People would ask her for a recipe for some-type thing, and she wouldn't really be able to tell them. But she was a very small woman, very slight woman, and I always helped her when I could. Of course I visited with her. She lived to be quite elderly before she passed away. She was always a joy to be with.

That sounds wonderful. Did your mother work in the store too?

Yes, my mother did. I can't remember what year she actually went to work, but my grandfather needed help at the time. He was getting up in years, and my mother went to work in the store. And at that time, she was only substitute teaching, in those days. And it wasn't until probably in the fifties that my father went to work in the store, and she and my father took over because my grandfather was no longer able to handle the store.

Did you start to work in the store too, more hours?

Well, I went to the University of Nevada in 1951, and then from there I went into the United States Army and served there for a while. When I came back, I lived in Reno for about five years, and worked off and on there. It wasn't until 1960 that I moved back to Battle Mountain again. I went in to help my parents in the store, and then I worked in the store for the next twenty years until 1979 or 1980.

Now I wanted to ask you, before we move into that: How did the war—and are we talking about World War II, because there have been so many wars—how did World War II affect the Battle Mountain area when the young fellows

were either drafted or enlisted? And what was it like here during that period?

World War II had a tremendous impact on the community of Battle Mountain, and I'm sure other towns as small. It seemed like there were an awful lot of young people that went to World War II, and many were killed from this area. But it changed everyone's lives. The children, of course, were trying to help the war effort by saving gum wrappers and cigarette wrappers and string and batteries and whatever else, and they had all kinds of scrap drives going, and all those activities. And the men, such as my father, who were at an age too old to be drafted during World War II, were part of the Civil Air Patrol, as well as my cousin René Lemaire and another cousin, Charles Lemaire. They were all active in the war effort. My father, for instance, was chairman of the Office of Price Administration, the OPA, locally. It was one of those thankless jobs. What he did was decide how much gasoline people got and whether they got any new tires or not, and probably several responsibilities that I don't even remember. But I remember some of the problems that were created, even among his friends that he had to turn down for one reason or another. It was a very difficult job, but he felt he was doing his share. The impact on us as children: I remember the day, where I was, and who I was with, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and how scared I was. To this day, I think my favorite programs on television are World War II movies about the war and the battles that they fought and so forth.

Were you drafted, or did you enlist?

No, I was drafted. I was going to school and I took a year off from the University of

Nevada and the Korean War was going on at the time. I was drafted into the Army. I served two years in the Army on active duty, and then when I came home, I decided to stay in the active Reserve. I rather enjoyed the military, and so I stayed in the active Reserve for another two years. So I had twelve, almost thirteen, years in the military when I was discharged.

During the period that you stayed in the Reserve, were you called into any action?

No, I wasn't. Fortunately, it was fairly quiet in those days. I was already discharged prior to the time that they had the Berlin crisis where they had to fly everybody and all the supplies into Berlin. But I had moved back to Battle Mountain then, and I commuted for two years. I commuted to Reno to Reserve meetings every two weeks, and then during the summer months we were required to go to summer camp for two weeks someplace. It just got to be more than I could handle from this far away.

When the young men left to go into the military—and of course so many young men went off to college—how many went on to other regions to live and work, and what percentage do you think came back—like certainly all of your children—to continue their life in this area?

There were many. It's hard to give a percentage of people that did come back to this area, but there were quite a few. The boys who were affiliated with mining families—or ranching families primarily—came back here. There was a place for them. But there were many that didn't, that married women from other locations and found jobs and a life that they would prefer rather than the small town

of Battle Mountain. So there were many that didn't come back.

You mentioned you went to the University of Nevada, Reno. Tell me about that.

Well, I entered in the fall of 1951. As I mentioned earlier, I was interested in sports more than anything, so I played football for the University of Nevada in the fall of 1951. I was on the track team in the spring of 1952, and during the winter months I was on the freshman basketball team. I made some lasting friends there. I didn't do well scholastically. There again, I did not know really what I wanted to do. School really didn't interest me that much except the athletic portion of it. So the social activities, I met my wife there. In fact, I was a pledge in the ATO (Alpha Tau Omega) fraternity and she was in the Tri-Delt (Delta Delta Delta) house as a freshman. The Alpha Tau Omega House was made up primarily of athletes in the college—they seemed to go together. One of the requirements as a freshman was to participate in an activity in the fall. This annual event in the fall was Homecoming, and it was called "The Wolves' Frolic," because of the "wolf pack" name in the university, and it was made up of skits from all the fraternity and sorority houses. My wife was in the can-can chorus line, and I was in the boys' ballet, if you can believe that. We had to practice together at the same time—well, all of us did, in the skit—and that's where I first met my wife.

So how long were you courting?

We went together for about a year-and-a-half. That year of college and then the next spring I came back to Battle Mountain and worked for a few months. Then I was drafted

into the Army and when I was stationed at Ford Ord, California, we decided to get married.

And then tell me when you got married, were you able to be together for a little while?

Yes, we spent about six months together at Fort Ord, California. I completed four months of basic and two more months of infantry leadership school. Then I was shipped overseas after that. But we had a great time and a lot of fun in the Carmel-Monterey area.

Tell me your wife's name.

My wife's name is Sally Anne. Her maiden name was Jolly.

Then were you separated for a while during the military period?

Yes, I was sent to Europe, and I spent two years over there, so we were separated for the next two years.

And tell me when you came back and your reunion and then how your life progressed.

Well, when I came back, I came back in February, and at the time, of course, she was living in Reno. I had visions of a great job that I was going to get and the new car that I was going to buy, and all these things that you dream of when you're overseas in the military—and when I came back to Reno at that time of year, reality struck, and there were no jobs available. And it was very difficult for the next few months. I finally was able to find work with Isabell Construction Company on the construction site there. The Isabell family was the big construction family in Reno at the time.

What year was that you came back and were in Reno?

That was in 1955.

So then tell me what your life was like and what your wife was doing and how long you stayed there in that area.

My wife was a bookkeeper. She had learned bookkeeping in college and she was a bookkeeper for a drugstore chain called Hale's Drugstores. I guess we had the normal young people's lives. I don't know how to describe it. We had a good time in Reno and her parents lived in Reno. I worked at various jobs. Finally, I think the fall of 1956, I went back to the University of Nevada again and completed another year. I majored in business administration. By the following spring we had two children in the family and it was very difficult to go to school full-time and raise the children, so that's as far as I got in school.

Would you continue telling be about finishing up in Reno and I know you said you later moved back to Battle Mountain. So do you want to tell us all about that?

Well, in the late fifties, it was apparent that my mother and dad were having a difficult time running the store. The business had increased to the point they really needed some help. And I hadn't established myself with anything in particular in Reno: I had purchased a service station and ran it for about a year-and-a-half, and it was not a money-making proposition, and so I was ready to make a move as well. So in 1960 we moved to Battle Mountain and I started working in the store with my parents.

A couple of questions that I have: How did your wife feel about moving to Battle Mountain? And did you still have two children, or did you have more?

We had three children at the time that we moved here. My wife was a little apprehensive about moving to the small community of Battle Mountain, although she was born in Ely, Nevada, a community that wasn't too large. She'd spent most of her young life in Reno. But it wasn't long after we moved to Battle Mountain [that] she established some relationships with my friends, and several of my friends were, of course, married by that time. Our children were at school age by then, the oldest ones. And so we got very involved with the community. Salle became president of the PTA in one of those first years. I got in the Boy Scouts. There were all kinds of activities in a small community where everybody seems to get involved. I umpired the Little League for about nine years, joined the Fire Department, and joined the Lions Club. Later on I became a county commissioner, and so it's been a very, very active twenty years since.

I don't know how you fit it all in! Did your wife have help with all the children while being so active?

No, she didn't really. The older children, of course, helped her with the younger children. She didn't work very much in those days, except to give us a hand at the store when we needed her. It wasn't until our oldest son started at the University of Nevada that she decided she'd better go to work so we could have some additional income.

And then what did she do?

She went to work at the school district as a secretary to the principal in the junior high there. She has always loved that job because she was involved with young people and young children, a lot of which still live in the area.

Is she still working?

Yes she is. There was a job available a few years after that as a bookkeeper in the superintendent's office. And of course she being a bookkeeper, applied for that job and she's been working there ever since.

That's just wonderful! Now I want to ask you to think back to when you left Battle Mountain to go into the military, and then when you came back to live here, what kind of changes had there been in that period that you could then observe because you'd been away?

Well, when I left here to go into the military, I was only nineteen years old. Two years in the military—it doesn't matter *where* you are—well, you grow up considerably, and so *your* personality changes as well as everybody else's. And when I came back, most of my friends were married and of course that changed our lifestyle a little bit, and so we interacted as married people. But the community itself had changed a little bit in those years. Of course when I left I was pretty young and I wasn't really interested in any type of local activities, and when I came back, I was quite a different person. And with my children, interested in *their* activities, why, we became interested too.

I want you to look at the town outside of your family, coming back and looking at it with new eyes, leaving and coming back, was there a change in the type of population?

in the economics? in the building? in the transportation and highways? Were there changes in the town itself in that period?

There really wasn't very many changes in the town itself in that period. It was after I moved back that the changes started to occur very rapidly. In 1962 we had a flood: The Reese River flooded the community and caused a great deal of damage. There was some rebuilding that went into effect after that. Following behind that, the Duval Corporation started a gold mine here and of course with the new gold mine and the hundreds of workers that came in, even in the construction phase, *totally* changed the community. Mobile home subdivisions were created, and it was no longer the small, little, friendly Battle Mountain atmosphere. There were many, many new people—some who fit in the community very nicely and were active in the community and all of its affairs; many others were not, and created a great many problems with crime and whatever.

It probably brought a lot more business to the store, right? and other businesses here?

It did bring a lot more business to the store, and of course all the stores enlarged. And naturally with more population there was greater amount of payroll available to local businesses, and so *new* businesses were established as well. And we never quite got to the point where we had a bowling alley or theater after all these years, but there were a lot of new businesses that we really needed as a small community. One of the *big* problems we had was doctors. Even with the number of people that we had moving in here, we couldn't find doctors who were willing to work in the rural setting. That was a big problem.

Well tell me, how did you deal with medical problems if you didn't have the kind of doctors that were needed?

When we didn't have any doctor available at all, every time we had an emergency it was up to the Fire Department to transport a patient, either to Elko or to Winnemucca to the hospital there. And of course that was very time-consuming, and fortunately, I can't remember ever losing a patient en route, but there always was at least an hour, of course, that it took to transport a patient out of here where they really didn't have intensive care coverage.

When did you finally get sufficient medical help here? Or is there sufficient yet?

Well, medical help has been a problem. I think in 1962, if I recall correctly, it was the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated, that the local doctor that had been here for so many years, passed away. And from that time on it was a matter of trying to contract with health firms—out of Salt Lake, out of Reno, out of Elko—to try to provide doctors for us. And during the years that I was county commissioner, I think we went through ten or eleven different doctors in those eight years—some of whom had personal problems when they came here, some of whom we didn't think had a very good bedside manner, some had wives who didn't want to live in a rural area. There seemed to be a problem all the time. So it was kind of a “musical chair” type thing with doctors who would come in and work for a while and they would leave. The emergency coverage was handled very nicely, but of course most people would prefer to have a doctor that they could call their family doctor and expect to be here over a period of years. And unfortunately, we weren't able to provide that.

You don't have that now?

We have two doctors under contract now and I understand that they're going to change the contract and the doctors will no longer be working for the Elko Hospital, but they will be working for the local hospital. But still they will not be out on their own and be working for themselves—they'll still be working under a contract.

No way to entice children and grandchildren to become a doctor and come back home?

Well, it would be nice if we *could*. We had one young man from Battle Mountain who *did* become a doctor, but now as I understand, he's going to specialize in radiology and so he's not going to be back to Battle Mountain anyhow. It's unfortunate, but it seems that most doctors all specialize nowadays, and they work in areas where they can interact with other doctors and make referrals back and forth for whatever particular problem their patients have.

I was looking at the Chamber of Commerce directory and also was at Bruce Swackhamer's house when I was interviewing him, and his wife was going to the dentist. I noticed it was a woman dentist, and she raved about her. Have you tried getting some women doctors up here, who might not be able to get jobs elsewhere?

We didn't designate between a man and a woman. We'd *love* to have a woman doctor just as well as a man. I know the dentist that you are referring to, and she is my dentist as well, and we're very happy to have her as a full-time dentist in the community. I wish there was some way that *she* had a friend that was a doctor that we could entice here.

Where were your children delivered when you lived in Battle Mountain?

Well, the oldest three, as I'd said, were all born in Reno, prior to the time we moved here. The doctor that I'd mentioned, Dr. Hyde, who had passed away in 1962, was still here when my daughter, Linda, was born, and she was born in the old hospital here. Then when the next boy came along, Lyle, we did not have a doctor here at all, and so he was born in the Elko hospital. Then the youngest, Lance, who came along eight years after Lyle did, we did have a doctor here in those days, and he was born in the Battle Mountain Hospital.

In some of the material I have been reading about Battle Mountain, and especially because I took a drive with a friend to Elko late yesterday, I read that when that freeway was extended, there was a fear and prediction that it would hurt Battle Mountain because it would take the tourists and the truck drivers out of the center of town. That was a prediction. How did it affect Battle Mountain?

It's really, really hard to tell what affect that had on the community. At first, I think all the businesspeople felt that it had a very definite impact, that we lost a lot of tourist business, and maybe we have. But at the same time, it being a freeway, and the type of automobiles that are manufactured these days, all have air conditioners in them, and people don't stop as often as they used to. Years ago, they stopped at every little town, especially in the summertime, because they needed an ice cream cone or a bottle of pop or their car was overheating or they'd already had two flat tires, or whatever. But that's not the circumstance at all anymore, and so that's why I think it's very difficult to decide that just because we were bypassed with a freeway, we

may have lost some of that business due to the freeway and the automobiles.

Before my first visit to Battle Mountain last month, it was just a little dot on the map, and when I came I was delighted and very unexpectedly surprised with what is here in town: the Holiday Inn Express, that big market across from the motel, which is very nice, the new Post Office. Tell me what the economy is like to start some of this new building.

Well, there's actually two new markets that sprang up after Duval Corporation—now called Battle Mountain Gold—came in. Swackhamers expanded their store, which used to be downtown in what is now known as the Owl Club. They moved out and built a brand new building, and then one of the brothers built the hardware store. And then a Midway store that was located downtown did not have the parking space available, and so they moved out by the post office and built a new building. So there has been a great deal of expansion since that time. There are many stores that people would like to see come in, as well as some recreational areas—as I referred to—a bowling alley and so forth. But it's all a matter of economics. And one of the problems, again, are freeways, and the fancy automobiles we have nowadays. It's very easy for people to jump in their car and in an hour they can be in Elko, they can shop at K-Mart, they can shop at any number of chain grocery stores to buy whatever they want. And this certainly has an impact on small communities.

Through the years, the mining industry—which is one of your largest—there have been starts and then dwindling and then new starts. Tell me, through the period that you have been here, from firsthand experience, about the impact of

that industry. And I know you had some times here when the economy was really bad, when mines closed?

Yeah, the economy here locally has been on a roller coaster ever since I can remember. The mining has always had its highs and its lows, and it's very fortunate for our location that there's more than one mineral. Years ago it was copper, and a little bit of gold. Well, *years* ago, it was gold. It was gold, period. And then copper came in and they mined copper. Then barite became very popular. Of course that's the drilling mud for these big oil drills. About the time it peaked out, when Duval came in, they came in primarily for copper, and they were mining copper. And then they were able to change their mill and open up new areas for gold. And so they were able to maintain all the personnel they had. And, of course, in later years, Echo Bay and many other companies have come in and opened gold mines. And hopefully the price of gold will stay high enough to hold the economy up for a few years in the future. But turquoise at one time was a very important mineral to our area. It was the type of thing that could be mined by individuals; they didn't need large excavation-type machinery—although some *did* and really got into it. It was the type of thing that two or three people could form a partnership and go mine turquoise, and even to some extent, barite, although there were some very big barite mines as well. But nowadays, as far as gold is concerned, it takes a huge corporation with an awful lot of money, an awful lot of machinery, to mine. So it seems like everybody's working for somebody else these days.

When these companies come in—and someone that I interviewed this week said there were two more gold mining companies coming in—what

is the reaction of the town when new people come in? And do they become a part of the community? Do they just travel up and back? Do they settle here? Or is it just kind of transient where they don't settle, but just come and fly home weekends? What is it like?

Well, we have noticed a big change in the type of people that have come to this community since the original mine, Battle Mountain Gold, came in. Some of those people came down from Idaho. On weekends they would go back to Idaho and do their shopping for their groceries, for their hardware, whatever, and then they would come back Monday morning and go to work. So they were taking their payroll checks to Idaho and spending them up there. A lot of the people that came in—and this is my opinion now—with Echo Bay, you don't really see at a lot of activities unless their children are involved in it. For instance, we don't have hardly anybody in Echo Bay in the Lions Club—nobody's asked to join the Lions Club. I don't see it any in the Masonic Lodge. I don't see it in a lot of the other organizations. So it appears to me that these people are *working* here, they're living in mobile homes, but their recreation and their activities and their purchasing is primarily taken to some other location, whether it be Elko or Reno, or wherever they're from.

Now the ones who come to do the mining—the workers, not the owners or the supervisors—are they usually single men? or are there families? and are they transient? are they recruited? How do they get these workers?

Well, the workers themselves, the workers that actually come in to take care of the mines, I think the majority of them are married. And lots of times they are transferees from other

mining properties that the mines may have. So they're not the type of people that are brand new to mining. They've already lived at some other location. A lot of them don't like it here because the town is still very small and there's a lot of things that we don't have that they would like to have. Maybe they came from Tucson, Arizona, or Phoenix or someplace like that, and they're overly-anxious to get back, so if the opportunity comes for them to transfer back or to pick a job at a different location, they'll do that, they'll move on.

Is Battle Mountain in a rising economy? or how do you see Battle Mountain in the next ten years?

I don't think Battle Mountain is in a rising economy, but I think they are in a stable economy, and I think they have been for the last ten to twelve years. The economy hasn't changed a great deal. And I base this upon my own business: it hasn't changed a great deal in the last ten years. So we're anticipating some more payrolls and a little impact from these other mining companies that are coming in. But the mines are actually located a few miles from Battle Mountain and it's possible that some of the people that are actively engaged in those mines aren't going to live in the Battle Mountain area. They'll probably commute from Carlin or possibly Elko. So we just don't know what to anticipate from them.

Now I want to go back to the store. Starting with when you came back from Reno, tell me, in kind of a daily, more specific way, of your role, and then how the store developed and how your role in it changed.

Well when I first came back, of course, the store was new to me. I'd never worked in the store before, and so I had to learn what

it was all about: how to order the groceries, how to price the groceries. We cut a little bit of meat—I had to learn about meat cutting. You know, we just did a little bit of everything. We carried a little hardware and some drugs—not drugs as such, but those type of things. So it was learning and learning the names of things and learning how to display them and all the aspects of a store. And of course at the same time I had to learn the new customers that came in—new to me. We had an awful lot of charge accounts that my mother and father had established, being a small community, and I had to learn about the people that charged and whatever, and learn a little about the bookkeeping. Part of my responsibility was to send out the bills at the end of every month. And so it was all new to me, and it took a few years to really learn that. At the same time, business continued to expand in the store, and there had to be some change some new refrigeration had to be purchased and some new shelving built, and some changes were made. It was a little unfortunate, I think, that for me, I wanted to make probably what seemed to be radical changes, and my family really didn't want any radical changes made to the store. There was a lot of history to the store, and they wanted to try to keep the store the way it was. And I didn't feel that, unless we made some *big* changes to the store, that we were going to increase in volume that much.

How many worked in the store with you?

There was just my mother and my dad and myself. As my children got older, there were occasions when I would bring the children in, especially in the evening, and help me stock shelves. If we were planning on going someplace for the weekend—Fridays we always had a big load of groceries—and so if

we went someplace on Saturday, for instance, I'd have the whole family over there Friday night and we'd all stock shelves and so forth, so my parents wouldn't have to worry about that for the day that we were gone. We stayed open six-and-a-half days a week and it got to be very difficult to spend too much time with my children, and I felt a little bit guilty at the time that I was gone, because I knew my mother and dad would have to be there by themselves.

Was it hard for them to hire some temporary help at times so that you could get away, or they could? or was the business not that good?

Well, I think temporary help was difficult, because it was a family-type operation. We had no other employees, and to hire just some temporary help, I really don't know what they could have done that would have really have helped very much.

Was most of the business where people would come in and buy? or did you deliver? Tell me a little more in detail the kind of a business it was. I don't have a feel for it yet.

Well, it was very small-town-type business because I delivered. Every afternoon at 4:30 I would deliver, and I had lots of calls from people who would call in and get orders. I delivered an awful lot to elderly people that weren't able to come to the store. And of course every day that they called it was kind of like a social occasion: they would ask me everything about what was going on, especially in my days when I was a county commissioner. And then when I'd deliver to their house, I'd have to visit with them and they'd show me this and show me that and whatever else. But these were some of the people who were friends of my grandparents

at the time that they were alive that I've known my whole life, so the store was very social.

It was a big part of the community. Tell me then, because your parents were getting older and there was a time when they couldn't work in the store, so let's move along a little bit.

Well my grandmother became quite ill, and she was elderly at the time, and so my father had to stay home and take care of her, and so there was just my mother and I that worked in the store primarily. And that got to be very difficult. I couldn't, or at least I didn't want to, leave her there by herself any more often than I could help. And that created some problems. It became apparent to me that the store wasn't going to build in volume any more, and the only way we were going to get any bigger was to make some changes to the store, and possibly hire some people to work for us and so forth. Anyhow, that didn't seem to be the direction that my parents wanted to go. So I had the opportunity to leave the store and go into the insurance business. So in 1979 I told my mother that I was going to get out of the store and I was going into my own business. So it was about that time that we leased the store for, I guess, about two years or two-and-a-half years. During the time that I was in the store and owned a big part of it, my wife and I bought out all the rest of the family that had an interest in the store. So at the time that I got out of the store, my wife and I actually owned the store building.

Was there friction? It's hard to give up something, of course, that's always been in the family and historic. Did it create any break in feelings? Was the community disturbed? And did you lease it to local people?

No, actually, I think the friction was probably with my immediate family—my

mother and father—because the store *was* established so many years ago by my great-grandfather and had been in the family for all those years. At the time that I decided to sell the store, I talked to all my children and all the rest of the Lemaire family that had any interest, that might *show* an interest, none of which lived in the area any more; explained to them what I was going to do, why I was going to do it; and none of my children indicated an interest in coming back and running the store—they all had their own lives. And so there really wasn't a problem with anyone else but probably my mother and my father. And I could understand that to some degree, because they had worked in the store a lot of years, and hated to see it...

Tell me, you said you started an insurance business and you did go back to the university and majored in business. Tell me about that business.

Well, I did get a little background in the second year that I went back to the University of Nevada. I took some business courses and some insurance courses. During those first few years just out of the Army I tried my hand at life insurance. I soon found out that I didn't have a big enough foot to put in people's doors. It was a different type of insurance business than I'm presently in—although I do sell life insurance. But when I bought into this insurance business it was with an existing corporation, owned partly by a friend of mine that I'd known for years: he went to high school in Elko. It was a good setting for me, and it was the type of business that runs five days a week, although you do get phone calls sometimes on Saturdays and Sundays for accidents or whatever. I found that I would have more time to myself and my children. And so it was a good move. I've never been

sorry, really, that I made that move. I've been there about fourteen years in the insurance business now, and probably a couple more and maybe I'll decide it's time to retire and play more golf! [chuckles]

Now back to the business, so I can kind of get a feel for it: How many in your office? is it your own business, or do you share it with others? what kind of insurance do you sell?

I don't own the insurance business myself, it's part of a corporation, though I'm a stockholder in it. I'm the managing agent, and then I have another girl in the office that has an agent's license, and two other girls that we call customer service representatives, so there are four actual employees there. We do a good business, we're an independent insurance agent. We work with several companies. When somebody comes to us for insurance of any kind, we're able to find a market for them, depending upon their situation. In automobile insurance, we have to find out if they've had previous insurance, what kind of automobiles they have, how many tickets they've had, and so forth. And then after we get all this preliminary information, we're able to find the proper market in the price for them. And it's the same way with homeowners policies. We have to find out the age of the building and so forth before we know what kind of a market to put them in. Some people are a little unhappy about the price that they have to pay, but we have to go with the type of situation that they're in, because we do not make the prices, the insurance companies set the prices.

Is there a lot of competition?

There *is* competition: Farmers Insurance Group has an office locally and they compete

with the automobile and the homeowners. There is another smaller insurance company, Alpine, that's here presently. They do write a share of their business. I think the majority of the business in my office, though, is commercial-type businesses. I sell the insurance to Lander County and the Lander County School District and the airports and most of those, and that takes a great deal of time to keep up with all that.

Do you have a lot of the new people coming in that come in to you?

Yes, we do. We're quoting somebody continually, and fortunately we have the computers and all the software available so that it's a very simple thing. You can put in the information that they give you, and run it through your computer, and make some comparisons to other companies that may want to write the same business.

That's wonderful. One of the things that I've observed in my visit—I was only here a few days in February, but I've been here all this week—and I notice for just a small town, there are a lot of sheriff cars and police cars kind of roaming the streets. Tell me about that.

Well, it's an unincorporated town, and so the Sheriff's Office acts as the city police as well as the sheriff of the county. So a lot of these vehicles here are used in the surrounding areas, maybe out at ranches or some of the subdivisions that are outside the community, but we don't have, I don't think, any more crime than any other town our size.

I thought maybe that helps stop it, because I am not used to seeing cars cruising around, and I wondered if that helped it. The thing that impressed me in this town is...I've been taken

to homes for pre-interviews and interviews, and people keep their doors open, which is unheard of anywhere else. So is it a kind of a combination that the presence of the cars, and so visible also, helps with the security?

I'm sure that it does, although this has been the kind of a community that most people *do* leave their doors open, although occasionally there is a break-in or something, it's not the type of community where anybody's very afraid of who might be here or what they might do.

I observed that, and that's rare in this country, because I travel a lot. The other thing, I wanted to make a comment, and then ask you: With the economy in so many parts of the country—and I'm from California—so bad, I don't see any real poverty here. People have clean homes; I don't see homeless; even though there's gambling places with drinking, I don't see any evidence of what you see in most other even smaller towns. Is my observation correct? Is it because no one is without a home or without a meal, that they don't need to rob people?

Well, I'm sure that's probably the case. I think there are some large payrolls from the mining companies and various other support groups in the community, and most of the people that live here, if they really want to work, there is a job available to them. I'm sure there's probably a few people living in town that are living in conditions that they would prefer not to be living under, but as is the case in lots of part of the country, they live that way because that's the way they want to live—not because they're forced into living that way. But I think since the mining industry has come into the town and the town has expanded, I think one of the other things that has helped too is the advent of the modular mobile homes

that are available to people at lower costs than stick-built homes. And so a lot of the people that may have been living in older, dilapidated houses, at least have a mobile home to live in now, that can be kept clean and very neat.

A couple of other questions: Nevada is one of the rare states where they allow prostitution, and I understand there is still a place in town. Is there still an active house of prostitution here in Battle Mountain?

Yes, there is. As I understand it, it's still open. It's been one of those types of businesses in this community that has never really been a problem. It's well policed by the Sheriff's Department, and the people that are involved in it are the type of people that have been good citizens of the community. In all the years we've had that type of an activity here, I can't really remember where we've had any serious problems with it.

The other area that I wanted to ask you about is the Indian colony. I know you said that when you were in school there were some Indians there, and I really don't know anything about the Indians in this region and the town's reaction, or if there's any controversy. Anyway, tell me more about the Indian population. When I was driving to Elko, I did pass the Indian Colony where housing was provided for them.

I can always remember an Indian reservation here. The Indians have been given certain properties by the federal government way back when. A few years back, the Indian colony was expanded and there were some new houses built out there. And then there's been some laws changed where the reservation itself seems to be off-limits to the local police department or fire department unless they're

invited to come on. So they pretty much police themselves and take care of themselves out there. But most of the people, the Indians that are there, work *off* the reservation and don't seem to have any problems with interaction between any of the rest of the people here. They attend local schools and so forth. I've just grown up with Indians: In fact, one of my great-uncles loved to hunt and fish with an Indian friend of his and learned to speak Shoshone. The Indians used to hang around the store all the time when I was a little boy and tell stories and whatever. So I've just grown up with them and they've been great as far as I'm concerned.

That's good to hear, because so many communities, there's controversies either over water rights and so forth. Also, they're hired everywhere? In other words, in people's homes or stores or construction or mines? That's good to hear. Now, I saw, I think in the Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, projections for a new, enlarged airport. What can you tell me about that?

Well, I'm not aware of that. The airport that we have out here was built in World War II as an emergency airport for military aircraft. And it was built, very large with two cross strips out there, and there's been a lot of planes that have made emergency landings there over the years. The expansion, I think, has to be in possibly buildings at the site, rather than the airstrip itself. I can't remember the exact length of the airstrips, and I probably should know them, but big 727s or whatever can land on that airport. It can accommodate big aircraft.

Now the commercial planes that come in there: what are the destinations? I didn't even know, until I came here, that there was an airport. Is it something I could catch a plane to?

No. Really, there are no commercial aircraft, as far as I know, that are landing there now. There have been, off and on at times, some of the smaller aircraft that have flown from Salt Lake City to Elko, over to Ely, stop in Battle Mountain and then go on to Reno. There was enough [traffic] during the initial stages of the mines going in out here—there was an awful lot of engineers and those-type people that would move around using commercial aircraft. But there was not enough involvement in that to continue that, and so, to my knowledge, right now there are no commercial activities out there.

Then, are they privately-owned planes?

Yes, they're all privately-owned planes. In fact, a lot of the mining interests have their own jets that they fly in here and park them out there. Fueling is available and so forth, so a lot of people buy an old clunker or some type of vehicle and just leave it parked at the airport so that they can run back and forth to town with.

So are the charges for parking and using the airport—is that a great help in keeping up the expense of the airport?

I doubt very much if there's enough activity out there to help with the expense of the airport. I think it's more the sale of the gasoline that helps support the airport. I think the county gets a half-a-cent, and then the fixed-base operator gets something, so.

I know that there are a lot of things that I don't know what to ask you, so what I want you to do now is tell me things that you feel would help people wanting to know about the development and history of Battle Mountain through your personal work on the Commission, your life

here, your work here, and just go on to any subject that you feel would be important on the tape.

Well I think we probably covered just about everything that I can think of. Battle Mountain has been another small community in the West that probably has its traditions and the people are probably a little different than some of the people that have grown up in the city, but I've always been thankful that I moved back to Battle Mountain. I've raised my six children here and I feel that they've gotten an excellent education in the local schools, they've all gone their own ways and gotten good jobs and have been good family people, so that the life for young people in the community I think has been great. It's a type of a place where you don't worry too much about your young people: if you don't know where they are, one of your friends does [chuckles] which used to happen an awful lot when our kids were small. But there's a lot of people that have come and gone in this small community: some have had an impact, and some haven't. We've had our ups and downs, but I think it's been a great place to live, I really do.

I've had, really, the privilege and pleasure to get to know Lori [Louis' daughter]. I think she's an exceptional woman, and just in our brief encounters, I feel she's very exceptional. I meet lots and lots of people, and she's also very efficient with a busy family. When I've asked her to arrange for pre-meetings, I've been impressed with how quickly she's been able to arrange them. And I was very excited about the projected plans for the museum, and I urged her to have an archives. What can you tell me about that, about the plans, and about when you feel that might start becoming a reality?

I really don't know that much about the museum.. That's pretty much been Lori's project. Of course my mother—her grandmother—got the project off the ground, and then it appeared to be to the point where it was kind of stalling and Lori got very active in it. She and her husband have really come a long ways with the program. I'm anxious to see what comes out of it. But as far as the museum itself, I really can't tell you very much about it, because I've kind of stayed away from that and let them have their own project. I've been involved in a lot of things in the community, and I'm getting at the age when I would rather that somebody else start to handle those kind of activities.

Well, I'll be really very interested in watching that development as I continue with this project and work with Lori and follow her, because I think that she's a very unusually remarkable young woman. Before I end this interview, is there anything more you can tell me about what you feel is in Battle Mountain, or will be here that we should know about that people who listen to your tape or read your transcript, might appreciate from you?

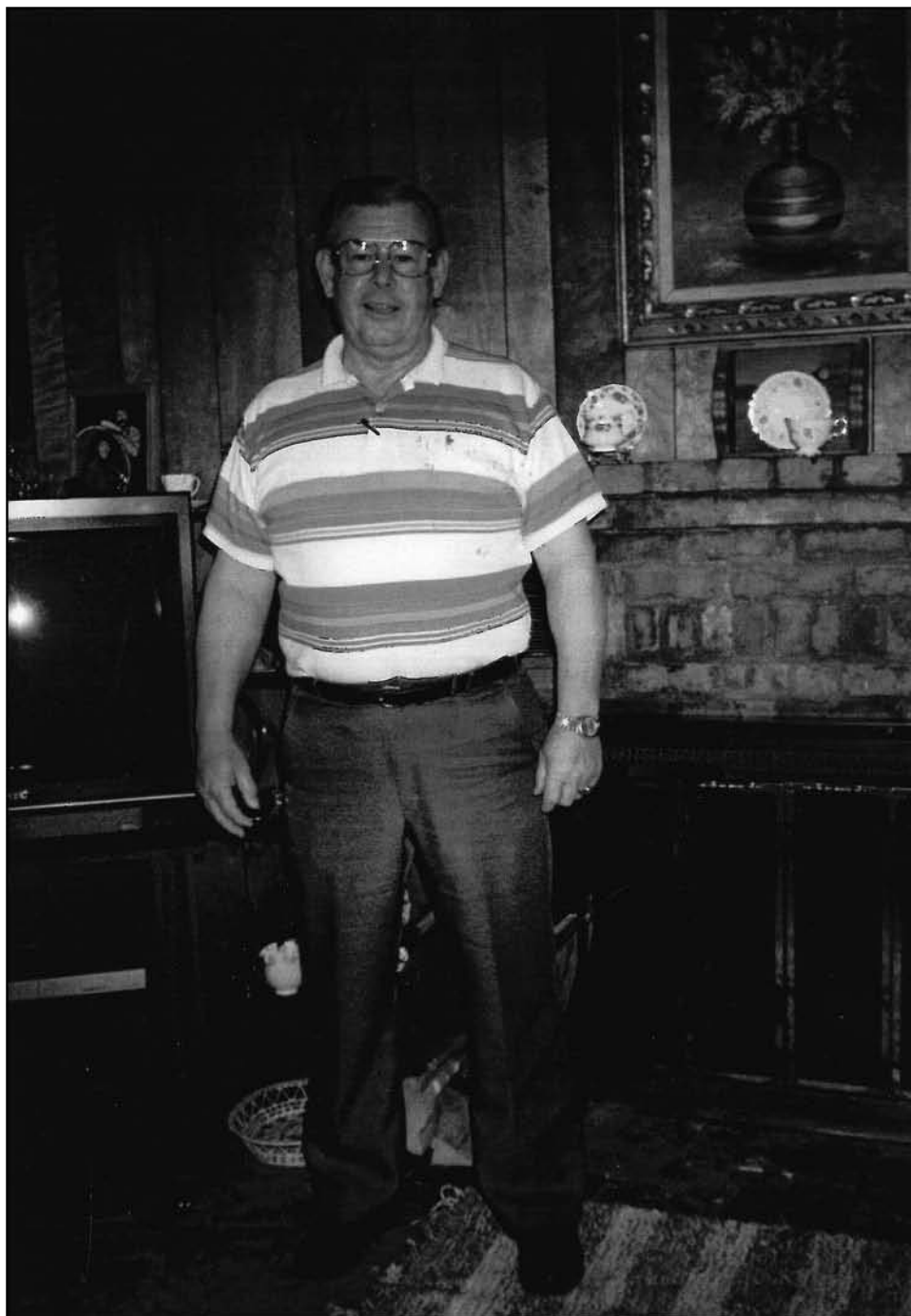
No, I really don't know of anything. I don't anticipate that the community is going to change a great deal in the next ten or twenty years. It really hasn't changed that much in the last twenty. It has changed, but it's changed very gradually. I don't know of anything that's going to change that very much. It's always been a community based upon mining, and as long as there's mining activity in the town, the town is going to continue on a solid growth pattern. A town has to grow a little bit or become stagnant. So I'm hoping that it will continue to grow that way. Of course, like many other communities, after they get to a certain size, it seems like you can even change

a lot of the activities, a lot of the industries in it, and it doesn't hurt the community. Twenty years ago I didn't think we'd have as much mining as we're having here now, so who can really anticipate what the *next* twenty years [chuckles] is going to be like?

Well, I've enjoyed sharing the interview with you, and I have certainly enjoyed getting acquainted with Battle Mountain. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for giving us your interview. This is the end of the interview.

LOUIS MOLLART LEMAIRE
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



LOUIS MOLLART LEMAIRE,
MARCH 19, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

LOUIS MOLLART LEMAIRE

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

RENE MAESTRETTI**PREFACE**

Rene Acree Maestretti's maternal grandfather owned two big ranches out of Austin and her paternal grandfather was a miner. Her paternal grandmother had a brother who came to Austin at the height of the mining activities and became Lander County District Attorney. He sent for his sister who met Grandfather Acree and they married in Austin. Before coming to Austin, she went to college in Texas, and brought with her the first yellow rose from Texas that was ever grown in the town of Austin and all of Nevada. Bert and Millie Byer Acree were both born in Austin, grew up together, and lived in Austin all of their lives. Rene, born in 1908, was the oldest of the four children. She recalls with enthusiasm and wistfulness a wonderful home life, one she wouldn't change for anything.

Rene's mother was a talented pianist, played for church, school affairs and later for dances. Her father played the drums and two brothers played the saxophone, so there was

always music in their home, with everyone singing, dancing and playing together.

Bert Acree was Lander County Recorder and Auditor for fifty years. Rene was his deputy for seventeen years, after taking a commercial course in high school. She married Lee Maestretti, a local young man when she was eighteen. He bought the Austin Garage in 1930 and generated power for the town of Austin until 1976. He also bought the town's theater where movies were shown Saturday nights and holidays until television arrived.

Rene describes the dances at the International Hotel, and later the Hogan Hotel, where her parents provided the music and everybody in town attended. They also played for dances at the town hall, the firehouse and the school. And as her brothers got older, they played in the band with their parents.

Rene is surrounded by a large loving family of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and her lovely home is constantly filled with friends and family and

her fond memories of a wonderful, happy life in Austin.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Rene Maestretti at her home in Austin, Nevada. The date is September 18, 1993.

Good morning, Rene. It's a pleasure to be here to interview you. Would you please tell us your full name, where and when you were born.

Rene Maestretti: Rene Acree Maestretti; Austin, Nevada; May 19, 1908.

You were born here?

Right here.

Will you tell us your father's name?

Elbert McGirk Acree.

Where was your father born?

Austin, Nevada.

Oh, my goodness! Tell me your mother's name.

Cora Mildred Byer.

And where was your mother born?

Austin, Nevada.

Oh, my, that's unusual, to have both parents born here in Austin. So they knew each other, they grew up together here?

Yes.

When did they marry?

It was February 20, 1907.

How many children in the family?

Two boys and two girls.

And where are you in the lineup?

I'm the oldest.

How long were they married before you were born?

They were married in 1907 and I was born in 1908.

Now I want to move along to your earliest memories of your childhood and I don't know, maybe you were four or five or six, but tell me where you lived and what your home life was like.

It was a *wonderful* home life. We were raised on music. Just a *grand* life—I wouldn't change it for anything.

You said music. I want to go back to your parents and their musical abilities. Were they always musical?

Always.

Did they start playing for dances before they married?

I don't think so. My mother played for church, growing up, and school affairs. She was always a pianist and always played for everything they asked her to.

Was it a natural talent, or did she take lessons?

She took a few lessons, but it was really natural.

And what did your dad play?

Well, then later he played drums. I had two brothers who played saxophones. So that was it.

So when you were born, they were already playing music in the home?

Oh yes! Singing, everybody sang and played and everything. It was just a wonderful family, you know, get together.

Would they do this evenings?

Yes. Company, and everything.

Did you start in any musical instrument?

Piano.

And when did you start that?

Oh, I don't know, maybe when I started to school at six years old.

Did you have lessons?

Oh yes!

Who was your teacher?

Sometimes my mother and sometimes teacher.

So you always had a piano in your home?

Always had a piano.

How wonderful! I want to know a little bit about the personalities. First let's start with

your dad. Tell us about him, so we can get a picture from you—not a photograph—but a picture from you of the kind of person he was.

He was a very fine man, very conscientious, civic-minded. He was just a fine man. He was Lander County Recorder and Auditor for fifty years.

When he first married, what work was he doing?

He was working in the store.

And tell me what store.

I think Austin Commercial Store was the name of it. It was a big store.

Was he a hired person there?

Yes.

Did he ever tell you what he did?

Oh, they loaded and unloaded the freight wagons and things like that.

How long did he work for the store after he married?

Not very long, because then he ran for office and was elected.

Was that County Recorder?

And Auditor.

Tell me a little bit about his responsibilities in that job.

Well, they were great: he helped everybody that he could, all the other officers. That's just

the way it was—very conscientious about his work.

What did a county recorder and auditor handle? What was the actual recording that they did and the kind of work they did?

Recorded all the documents of every kind, and took care of the books for the financial affairs for the county.

Did they have any machinery then, or was it handwritten?

At first, it was handwritten, and then it was typewriters.

How often did he have to run for that office?

At first it was every two years, and then the Legislature changed it and it was every four.

So he was elected every time for how long? How long did he have that position?

Fifty years.

Unbelievable! He must have been just wonderful. Did you ever go into his office and see what he did?

I was his deputy for seventeen years.

Oh! Okay, now I want to know, as a deputy, what did you do, and how old were you when you started?

Oh, I think I was seventeen.

Was he your boss?

He was my boss.

What did he have you do?

Type, everything that had to be done, helped him.

Did you learn those skills in high school?

I took commercial in high school.

When you took commercial in high school, what were some of the things that you were taught?

Typing, shorthand, just the usual.

When you worked with him, was he different in his role as a boss than in the home as a father?

Always the same—just a very kind man.

Tell me about your mother. Let's see, there were four children in the family, and so she probably was busy with the family?

Yes.

But she still found time for the music?

Oh yes! And they were very civic-minded. My dad was in the Knights of Pithias, and a Mason. He later belonged to the Lions Club for years. Then my mother was an Eastern Star and a Pithian sister. And they were both complimentary members of the Austin Volunteer Fire Department.

So this was a very busy household!

Oh, it was!

Did you have chores then when you were little? Did you have to help in the house?

Oh sure, washed dishes, do what any child would do: clean up the room, make your bed. Yes.

What did your brothers have to do?

I guess...[laughter] I don't know.

How was it in a household with all those brothers? Did you play together?

Oh yes, but sometimes there'd be a squabble. It was just an ordinary family, just like any other thoughtful family.

Of course we know all families now aren't like that, so that was unusual, I think.

Yes.

Now I understand there was a theater in town, once upon a time. Tell me about that.

Some partners built a theater. The theater used to be the undertaking parlor. And then these men came in and built a theater. I can't remember how long they operated. They closed down, and of course the Austin people didn't like that, so they sold it to Lee.

Now who is Lee?

My husband.

Oh!

And we ran it until TV came in.

Now, I've got to back up a lime, because here they sold something to Lee, and I don't have you married yet! So let's go back: tell me where you met your husband.

In Austin.

Was he in your school class?

No, he was ahead of me.

How long did you go together, seriously, before you married?

Oh, about a year-and-a-half.

And when you married, how old were you and where did you first live?

I was eighteen. We lived in Austin.

Did you rent a little place?

Yes, we rented a home here.

How soon after your marriage did he buy the theater?

Yes, he bought the theater, but I don't know how soon after we were married. We were married in 1926, and in 1930 he bought the Austin Garage. From 1930 until 1976 we generated power for the town of Austin.

Wow! From the station?

From the Austin Garage, yes.

What kind of equipment did that take? I don't know much about that, to generate power.

It took generators and diesel engines.

Was that when the town first started to have electricity?

That was the first.

And was that because it was initiated by your husband?

He had the idea, yes, and carried it out.

Wow, that's a heavy responsibility. Were you involved at all with the garage and the power plant?

Yes, service station bookkeeper.

So you worked with him. Was that after your kids were a little bigger, or what?

Well, yes. We were married in 1926 and he bought it in 1930.

During that period did you change where you lived? Did you live in the same place?

No, we changed homes, and finally in 1942 Lee bought two homes from Penelas which was a mining company sixty miles south of Austin near Lone.

Now I want to get back to the theater: was this where the dances were held?

Oh no, no, no.

Where were the dances held?

At first the International Hotel had a dance hall. Then that was abandoned and the Hogan Hotel had a dance hall and that's where our dances were held.

How often were dances held? Weekends?

On holidays and just whenever somebody wanted to dance, I guess.

Did your parents play for every dance here? Were they ones who provided the music?

They did.

How old were your brothers when they started to play? Did they join your parents in the music?

Yes, when they were high school age.

So through all those years then, your parents supplied the music?

Yes, for the town.

So in other words, they were busy all day, and then they'd be busy a lot of nights?

That's it!

Would you go to all the dances to be with them?

Oh, yes! everybody went. It was a good town then, in those years.

Sounds wonderful! Did you dance a lot?

Oh yes, loved it!

Do you have pictures of your family performing at the dances?

Oh no.

No photographs?

No, no, no. Toward the end, their music was taped, and different ones in town have tapes, but I don't remember any pictures.

Do you know where I might be able to borrow a tape to have it copied? If you do, would you let me know? because we have techniques to copy, and I think it would be important.

I have one right here.

And no photographs? No newspaper photographs even?

Oh, there were pictures taken of them in the Reveille, but they would be in the old Reveilles.

So I can look for some pictures there. Now back to when you said the theater was purchased by your husband. Was that movies?

Yes.

Tell me a little bit about the movie house. It must have been very popular here. How often did they show movies?

Every Saturday night and on holidays, probably two nights.

Where did he get the film? How did he handle what he would show?

They were shipped in from Los Angeles.

Would you and he select them?

A salesman would come ahead and everything was taken care of.

So whatever was on then.

Everything was booked for a year.

Was it popular? Did everyone go?

Oh yes, kids and all.

Were the dances still being held in the hotel ballroom? Did the dances continue in the same...

Why yes.

Did the place change? Did the dances change after that second hotel? Or was it still there at the hotel? You said the dances moved from the International and then they went to the Hogan. Did it stay at the Hogan?

Yes, until the Hogan burned down.

And then where did they have dances?

Oh, at the town hall, the firehouse, the school.

Oh! all over! Now, when you had your children and your husband and you were busy with the garage, tell me a little bit about your parents. Did their life change as the kids grew older? Did your mother get active in other things as you kids grew up?

Well, no, she was always active. She just continued.

Did the boys and your father do any fishing and hunting?

Oh yes!

He found time for that too?

Yes.

Did you go with him, fishing or hunting?

No.

That was the fellas' part?

That was the men.

Now I want to go back a little bit, because you're rare in that you were born here and your parents were born here. When you were starting school, first I want to know where was the school? Was it the same school that's here now?

No, no.

Where was the school? Can you remember?

I know where it is, but I don't know how to tell you.

Was it right here in the hills of the town?

Yes, it was right here.

Describe it.

It was a brick building, five or six rooms, lots of school children, big playground.

So was it a bigger town then?

Oh! by far!

So was that when the mining was flourishing?

That's right.

Tell me a little what the town was like when you were growing up as a child, since that is gone.

It was just a good community, lots of children, just a happy town. If anyone had

sorrows or heartaches, it was everyone's. When everybody was happy, everybody was happy. It was just a good town.

Were most of the people here because of the mining?

And ranching.

Tell me, do you know what the population approximately was in those early years?

I have no idea.

Now, I understand it's 350. Would it be double that?

History says at one time Austin's population was over 10,000.

In the 1860s?

Probably, yes, when mines first started, yes.

Would it be double what it is? Any idea? Were there more houses than there are now?

Lots of houses. It was a beautiful town. Now there are hardly even any foundations left.

With a bigger population, were there more stores and buildings on the main street?

Oh, yes!

Can you remember what some of them were?

Crescenzo's Dry Goods; Escobar's Dry Goods; very fine commercial store, Murphy's Store. There were lots of businesses up and down the main street.

Was the International Hotel kind of the center place when that was flourishing?

I suppose it was, I don't know.

When you finished high school and married, when did the town start to change because of the closing of so many mines? Can you remember? Did you notice when there was a decline? Was it during the Depression?

I don't know, but I have seen it close and come back. The mines close and then come back. This is the lowest I ever saw Austin tumble, this last time.

Did your family ever get involved with mining and prospecting?

My dad was very interested, yes.

And did any of the family do prospecting and succeed and have any mines?

No. They just prospected just to get out, I think mostly, in the mountains.

As the family was growing, what kind of work did your brothers get into, and did they stay around in this area?

My younger brother was a state surveyor at first. And my older brother worked for different mining companies.

Did they all stay here in Austin?

My younger brother left, but my older brother stayed, and he was killed in an accident.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Did any of your brothers go into the Service?

No, they were never the right age at the right time.

One of the things I notice that's so interesting to me throughout Lander County is how many of the children stay in the county or come home. That's so unusual in today's society.

That's right. They go where they can find work. If they don't go to college, they just go find work someplace—move out.

So many of them I interview come back to this region because of the close family ties and the land and the houses, and they miss it. Have you observed that?

Oh yes, I should say so! Yes.

As you were married and had your children, tell me about the interaction of your children with their grandparents.

Oh, very close—too close. That was the whole trouble, the family was too close, and we suffered greatly when someone of the family passed away. We were all too close.

[expressing concern] Oh. Did your mom and dad stay pretty well in their health?

Very well, yes.

I know that in the interviews I've learned about medical problems. Did you have any problems in your families as your children were born and there were other things. Did you have any major problems?

None.

Good, so you were fortunate there. As you were progressing and the kids were getting

bigger, you said you were helping in the service station. Did you get active in other things as your children got bigger in the community, as you parents did?

Oh yes, you always took part in schools with everything that you could do. I was an Eastern Star too. There was that. So, oh yes.

You said your family was so musical. Did you all get together on holidays?

Oh, I should say so!

Let's take a Christmas with all the family, after you were old enough to remember. What was Christmas like for the family? Where did you hold it? Whose place would have it?

It would depend: maybe sometimes my folks', my place. Relations came from far and near. It was just a wonderful family gathering.

Did you parents live in the same house that you grew up in?

No.

Did they get a bigger house or smaller house as you grew? Where did they move to?

It was just about the same size, and it was near where the elementary school is now. Before, we lived where I went to school. And then later, in 1922 they moved near where the elementary school is now.

I know where the elementary school is. And so you could just walk to school and walk home for lunch?

Well, I never went to school in the new school, it wasn't built until 1926 and I graduated in 1925.

Did the other kids...

They did.

As your family was growing up, I know you had music in the home. What other kinds of things did kids do in Austin, especially in the high school years? What would kids do beside the evening dance? What other kind of social life was there, like in winter?

Picnics and sleigh rides, and play games. Well, I don't know about the high school [kids] playing games, but I know in the summer all the children would gather one place or another and play games. You never see that any more.

And it was a really safe town?

Oh, I should say.

None of the problems that you read about in urban areas?

Nothing, no.

Now as the mining came and went, do you know where some of the miners would come from or which ones decided to stay and settle here? I know there was an influx of so many people during the rise and fall of the mining. Is there anything you can tell about that? any of the people who came or the changes in the town because of the new people? were the schools overcrowded? How was the town affected?

Well, to tell you the truth, I never paid any attention to it. It was just a town. Lots of people, yes.

Did some of your dear friends leave when the economy was slowing down? Did it affect you with friends or relatives?

Oh yes! Lots of different families left. My heavens, yes.

Did any of your family leave because of that to find work?

No, only my brother, because he was a surveyor.

Now back to your husband and the station. Did he stay in that? Did he buy the movie house while he had the station? Did he still keep the station?

Oh yes! We didn't buy the theater until years afterwards. I can't remember what year it was. The Reveilles will tell you.

In other words, most of your married life you had the service station and the power plant?

That's right.

And because it was a service station, there's a lot you can tell me about the roads and the traffic through Austin.

Was the business slow then at first?

Oh no! This was the Lincoln Highway at first. Then it changed to Highway 50. But there was travel. It took you a long time to go from place to place, because Fallon and different places are miles from Austin.

Yes.

And we had a garage too, lots of breakdowns, lots of tow jobs.

Were you the only service station that had all of those facilities?

No, there was another garage in town, but we were the only ones who could tow.

How many were hired at that service station? Did you have to hire people to help with the work?

The engines generating the power ran twenty-four hours a day. We had a day man and a night man.

And what about repairing cars?

We had a mechanic.

Were they all local people that were hired?

Some were, some weren't.

The ones that weren't, did they then move here and live here?

They did.

So that helped the economy, providing work and income.

Yes.

Now as the road was paved and people had better cars and more traveling, was it a slow change, or did the service station really pick up and did you have to hire more people?

No, we never hired more people. Everything picked up...

But you were able to keep pace with it?

Uh-huh.

Now I know the highway goes through. Were the winters real slow because of the snow, or did that not affect this traveling in the winters?

Well, people don't like to travel in the winter, but sure it affected the tourist trade. It made up in the summertime.

Did commercial trucks come through?

Not like they have the last four or five years.

Did they use the trains more in those days for shipping, in that earlier period, to ship things from the mines and the ranches?

Well, they used the train too, until it closed down. But they shipped the ore to the mills and smelters by truck.

And did they come through Austin? They'd have to come through Austin.

Well, if the mine was on the other side, yes.

Now, on the trains: I know that there was that little train in the early period from Battle Mountain to Austin. Did you ever ride it?

Oh yes!

Describe that, and describe the interaction then between Battle Mountain and Austin with that little train. Tell me about it.

Well, they'd run a motor, sometimes during the week. And then it seemed like on the weekend, or if there was a big load, they ran the train. It was a lark! It was more fun.

I read in some of the early papers that the Fourth of July was a big, big event, and everyone would come here to celebrate, even from Battle Mountain. Is that true?

Oh, they always had good celebrations—they came from *everyplace*.

Was it here instead of Battle Mountain? Did they come here to celebrate from Battle Mountain?

I don't know if Battle Mountain people came especially for that—just people came from all over.

What were some of the reasons that you would take the train to Battle Mountain—just for fun?

Just to take a trip, or to put a play on from school in Battle Mountain.

Oh, you did that? You interchanged activities? You said "put a play on." Tell me about that.

Well, the priest here—I'm no Catholic, but we used to help out, my sister and I. We'd have plays and then we'd take them to Battle Mountain and different places and put them on.

Was this part of the school? Or was this something that you initiated and would just take a group that included school kids?

It included the school kids, but we had our own plays at school. This would be community affairs.

Ah! You're the first one who ever told me about that! Who initiated this activity and where would you rehearse and put on the play in Austin? In the church?

Well, the Intentional hall was still available. We would put our plays on there. Then when that was gone, we put our plays on in the Hogan Hotel. School plays we put on at school.

I want to get back to the plays that weren't school: Who initiated this? How old were you?

Oh, I was in high school. Generally the priest of the Catholic church, to raise money for the church. And we all helped out.

Who was the director of the plays, and who picked the plays? I'm very curious, because you're the first one who told me, and it sounds fascinating.

The priest, as far as I was concerned, always was the head of everything.

He directed, and did he pick the cast?

Well, he and the Catholic Auxiliary—I guess that's what they were called. They all took part too.

Do you remember any of the plays? Were they musical or drama? Can you remember any of the names of them?

Both kinds, yes.

I'm fascinated. Now, you said you were in high school, so the years would be...I'd like to find out the years and find some publicity, because that's a fascinating project for a town outside of the schools. How old were the people performing in the plays? Were they all high school age?

Yes.

What were some parts that you played? Do you remember? [pause] No? When you would all go down to Battle Mountain to put on a performance, how did you go down? Did you go on the train, or did people drive cars?

We went on the train, generally went on the train.

Did you have to stay over?

Oh yes.

What was Battle Mountain like then, when you used to go in for plays?

It was just a town. We never really thought about it. You just went someplace to do something, and that was it.

What kind of crowds would you have at the plays? What kind of an audience?

Big audiences all the time—the church made lots of money.

That sounds like a lot of fun! Did you have fun doing that?

Oh yes. Then three or four of us Protestant girls would sing in the Catholic choir, because they didn't have. ... And then my mother *always* played the organ for the Catholic church.

Why did the Catholic church dwindle so that isn't functioning much? Is there a reason?

I couldn't tell you, I do not know.

I didn't ask you in the beginning, but I want to ask you a little bit about your grandparents,

whatever you can remember. First tell me a little about them and what your grandpop did here and what brought him here.

He was a miner and a mill man. This is my Grandpa Acree. I never knew him. He passed away before I was old enough to know him. He was from Lebanon, Missouri. My Grandmother Acree was from Tennessee, and they met here. My grandmother's brother was the District Attorney of Lander County. During the Civil War, my grandmother's brother went to Texas to get away from it, and he was an attorney. Then he sent for his sister, my grandmother. And then she went to college in Texas. And then he came here at the height of the mining activities and was the Lander County District Attorney. Then he had his sister come, and that's when she met my grandfather and they were married here.

Amazing! Did your grandfather work in the mines all the time?

No, then he ranched. And my grandfather on my mother's side owned two big ranches out of Austin.

Wow. What location, what section?

West.

Did that land stay in the family?

Oh no. When he got too old to take care of it and all, he just sold.

This is on your dad's side?

That was the mill. He worked in the mines and then he had a ranch.

Did your dad work on the ranch then too when he was growing up?

No.

Was it his father that had the ranch?

His father that had the ranch, but they lived in town so that he and his brothers and one sister could go to school.

I see. In other words, the ranch was far enough out so that...

Yes, that was what they did.

A lot of people had to do that. I've read a lot about that. Did you know your grandmother?

My mother's mother died when my mother was four years old, so I never knew her.

Now let's see, did you know your dad's mother?

Oh yes. She brought the first yellow rose from Texas that was ever grown in the town of Austin and all of the state [of Nevada]. I'll let you read the article, and then you'll know what I'm talking about.

Well, I had the joy—I think it was in June or July when I came—I'd heard about the yellow rose and I saw it in all its glory, and I have beautiful photographs of it. I'd read an article, but I didn't realize that was your grandma!

My Grandmother Acree, yes.

Oh, aren't we blessed?! So whenever you see them, you think of her?

Oh yes, yes.

Was the town of Austin named after Austin, Texas?

No, wasn't it a mining man that named it?
I've forgotten my history.

*It's such a coincidence to me that we should
have the yellow rose of Texas.*

Maybe it says in this article where she
came from in Texas, where my grandmother's
brother came from originally.

*Now this grandmom that brought the yellow
rose here, how old was she when she died?*

She was close to ninety.

Her husband died before she did, right?

Yes.

Then did she live with the family here?

Yes, and then she moved different places
with different sons.

Did she stay part of the time with your family?

Yes, oh yes.

*Tell me a little about her, about her personality,
her nature.*

She was a little thing, and a very strict,
old-time Methodist.

[chuckles] Was she the disciplinarian?

I re-educated their. ... [breaks up, laughing]

What did she think of the music in the family?

Oh, she loved it too.

So it wasn't like she was against dancing?

Oh, nothing like that, no She enjoyed
everything. Anything her children did was
fine with her.

Oh, good.

She was very strict, though. There's one
thing, very strict parent. They did right or else!

*And so your dad probably changed, and wasn't
going to be like he was brought up?*

This was my dad's mother.

*But he didn't follow her strictness with all of
you?*

Oh, no! She wasn't strict, *strict* but when
she said something, she meant it.

You obeyed right away.

Yes.

*Did she have a close relationship with the
greatgrandkids, with all of you?*

Oh yes! Yes.

*It's very unusual. You're the first one in any of
the interviews that first had two generations
born here, and then had a grandparent here
too. So you had an unusual life.*

She didn't always live here. She lived in
McGill—that's near Ely, Nevada. She lived
in Reno. She was Matron at the Oddfellows
Home Orphanage there in Reno for years. But
she'd come here then for visits.

So she was active just like your parents?

That's right.

Before we close, I just want you to tell me whatever you want, a little more about your unusual and wonderful parents, because they were really the key people—from what I can understand—that “sparked” this town. Can you tell me a little more about them?

They were just lovely people—millions and millions of friends.

So they were a perfect match, because it was both of them, not just one.

That’s right.

Did they both have that spirit of fun?

Oh yes! My heavens, yes! Yes.

Any stories from that period of life about them that would give us another dimension, something that you can recall?

I can’t think of anything right now. Just one big, happy family. Now they’re all gone. I’m the only one left.

Oh, really?

I lost my sister, three years ago. And my brother just about four years ago. Oh yes.

Now how many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren do you have that are still in Austin?

I have five great-grands here now. My oldest great-grandchild is Jolene, and she goes to community college in Elko. My youngest great-grandson is just a few weeks old. I have a granddaughter, Darla Sue Cantrell, and she has Michelle and Cord. Michelle is five, just started kindergarten; and Cord is three. I have a

great-granddaughter here who is a sophomore in high school. Then I have two little great-grandsons: one is three and one is six months. And then I have a little great-granddaughter, and a little great-grandson in Carson City. One is three, and one is just in the weeks.

Oh my gosh! Now, you have all these great-grandkids, now let’s get to the grandkids.

I have three grandsons and one granddaughter. The two grandsons and one granddaughter live in Austin. One grandson lives in Carson City.

You know, unbelievable, from two children, to see your family grow so well. And how many people have family all living so close to them?!

That’s just why we’re here. That’s just why we’re here. We’re so fortunate, yes. We’re so thankful.

Was there ever a time in your life that you wanted to be somewhere else?

Oh, we always planned, Lee and I planned, when we retired, it wouldn’t be Austin. See, you can’t make plans.

No. And you said that Lee died not very long ago?

In 1988.

Oh, that’s quite a long time ago. Before we end this interview, tell me a little bit—I don’t have any idea—about your husband, what kind of a man he was. Tell me a little bit about your husband.

He was a very good father, he was a Mason, he was civic-minded. He just loved life, love to dance. Loved to sing, but he

couldn't carry a tune in a basket! If he didn't know the words, I'd never know what he was trying to sing.

Did you ever travel at all?

Oh, yes! My heavens, yes. My grandson, Lane, is decathlete. It took him to lots of different states and away he went. We followed him all over.

Which grandson was this?

Lane, who lives in Carson. He has a business there of his own.

Tell me some of the places you would go. Would it be in this state? or other states?

Oh, no.

Where would it be?

Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Utah, California—all over.

How many would go?

My son and his wife, who are Lane's parents, and Lee and myself. We followed the team.

How wonderful! Did he win a lot?

For the United States, he held the pole vaulting record for quite a while until somebody beat him.

So you had travels?

Oh yes.

Now tell me—just before we end, because we're going to end it in just a few minutes. Well, of

course I can see what your life must be like with all this wonderful family. You have a beautiful home here. Tell me what your life is like now.

I have so much to be thankful for: My family. You know, they're all here, we're all together constantly, so it is just a very good life, nothing to worry about, that's it.

Kind of peaceful?

Very.

So I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County. Oral History Project, so much for sharing with us. This is the end of the interview.

And thank you, Sylvia.

RENE MAESTRETTI PHOTOGRAPHS



Parents of Rene Maestretti

(Original photograph owned by Rene Maestretti)



Mr. and Mrs. Bert Acree, parents of Rene Maestretti.

HONORARY DEGREES

Candidates presented by
Mr. A. C. Grant, Chairman, Board of Regents
Justice Milton B. Badt, Doctor of Laws
Dr. William E. Ogle, Doctor of Science

DISTINGUISHED NEVADANS

Candidates presented by
Mr. A. C. Grant, Chairman, Board of Regents

Bert Acree
Eva B. Adams
Sister M. Seraphine, O.P.
Sessions Wheeler

EMERITUS

Candidates presented by
Dr. Alex Dandini, University Marshal

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Dean, Max C. Fleischmann College of Agriculture
and Professor of Agriculture, Emeritus

Howard B. Blodgett
Dean of the College of Engineering
and Professor of Civil Engineering, Emeritus

Walter B. Dye
Agricultural Chemist, Emeritus

Paul R. Eldridge
Professor of English, Emeritus

Edith J. Holmes
Order Librarian, Emeritus

Sigmund W. Lefson
Professor of Physics, Emeritus

University of Nevada

1963

COMMENCEMENT

SEVENTY-THIRD ANNUAL



RENO

June Second and Third
Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Three



Senate Resolution No. 6

Memorializing Bert Acree for his 50 years of public service.

WHEREAS, Bert Acree, after serving Lander County as both Recorder and Auditor for 50 years, has now entered upon a much-deserved retirement; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Acree is a native of Austin, Nevada; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Acree, in addition to serving as Recorder and Auditor, served at one time or another as a deputy, without pay, for nearly every public office in Lander County, including the office of Deputy Sheriff from 1909 to 1954; and

WHEREAS, Whenever politicians, lawyers or historians seek information and advice about Lander County they turn to Bert Acree; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Acree was local chairman of all war bond and Red Cross drives during World War I, served the Red Cross and on the Selective Service Board during World War II, and has been a member of the State Boards of the Tuberculosis Association, Polio Association and Cancer Society; and

WHEREAS, Despite these accomplishments, Bert Acree is perhaps better known for his less formal service to the community of Austin, such as his promotion of social events and athletic activities of young Austinites; and

WHEREAS, Bert and Millie Acree are accomplished musicians who provide music for almost every social event in the area; and

WHEREAS, The advice, confidence and helping hand Bert Acree has given to so many have earned him a universal respect which might best be typified by a headline from the Reese River Reveille: "Mr. Austin himself Retires From Office"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, That this resolution be added to Bert Acree's well-deserved reputation in appreciation of his 50 years of service to Lander County; and be it further

RESOLVED, That by this resolution the Senate of the State of Nevada expresses its hearty best wishes to Mr. Acree for a happy and satisfying retirement; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a certified copy of this resolution be prepared and transmitted forthwith by the Legislative Counsel to Mr. and Mrs. Acree.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE

February 8, 1960

[Signature]
President of the Senate

RENE MAESTRETTI

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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MARY O. MARVEL

PREFACE

Mary Marvel's father, Ramon Oyarbide, came to the United States from Spain in 1904 after hearing stories about the mines and how easy it was to make money if you were willing to work hard. He first went to the Berlin Mine near Fallon, Nevada, then herded sheep in the Austin area. Austin was a bustling town during the silver mining boom, and her father bought a bar there, then opened a second one in Battle Mountain. There he met Mary's mother, Carmen Acorda, who was also born in Spain and traveled directly to Golconda, Nevada, near Battle Mountain, to work in a hotel. Ramon and Mary met and married, and made their home in Battle Mountain where all nine children were born. Her father loved ranching and cattle and leased land to start a cattle business.

Mary describes with enthusiasm their happy family life, growing up in a home filled with the Basque culture—Basque music and dances, Basque food and Basque language. The Oyarbides enjoyed an active social life with other Basque families in the community.

A musical child, Mary started playing the piano when she was five, and as a teenager played for dances around the county with Richard Marvel, who played drums. They later married and lived for several years with Richards' parents, Louise and Ernest Marvel, who were running the family business, the W. T. Jenkins Company. The Marvel and Oyarbide "kids" played together throughout their childhood so Mary had a close relationship with her in-laws, and describes them with affection and admiration.

After high school, Mary went to Sacramento to business school, and worked for a few years before her marriage. In 1964, when their two children were grown, she and Richard started a rental business, building eight apartments and three houses. The mining boom was starting. Mary was in charge of this business, and describes the influx of miners and the demand for housing. Due to severe arthritis, Mary's activities are limited now and Richard has taken over many of the household chores. Their children and grandchildren, her sister Carmen, and friends

visit frequently. And her face beams as she tells us of a happy childhood: "I still look and back and think, 'Oh, I wish I could do it again.'"

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Mary Marvel at her home, at 185 East Fourth Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada. The date is May 15, 1993.

Can you give us your full name?

Mary Marvel: My name is Mary O. Marvel.

And where were you born?

I was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada.

Oh, you're a native!

Yes, I am.

And what date was that?

January 30, 1921.

Do you know anything about your grandparents?

I never did know either one of them. My grandmother lived to be at least ninety in Spain, but she never came to this country, so I never did know her. My grandfather [Maxima Acorda] was here, but I was a very young child, and I don't remember him at all. He went back to Spain and stayed there.

Is that your father, or you mother's parents?

My mother's parents. I don't know anything about my father's parents.

Do you know who in the family came to the United States first, from your family?

My father [Ramon Oyarbide] came here first.

Do you know what brought him to the United States?

Well, he had all kinds of stories about mines and money and how easy it was to make money if you're willing to work. So that was the reason he came, like many others.

Were there people here that he knew who had come before him?

Oh, I think there were several people, but not many.

Where did he first come when he came to the United States, do you know?

Well, he came to work at the Berlin mine, which is near Fallon.

Is that in Churchill County?

Yes. And he and rather man came and they had tickets—they were supposed to get off the train in Reno. But not speaking any English, the train went on 200 miles, until it was discovered they were supposed to get off. [laughter] So they had a very difficult time getting to the Berlin Mine.

So when he came, he knew he was going to have a job in the Berlin Mine?

Yes, he did know that he had a job.

Do you know if they advertised back in Spain?

I don't think so. I think word of mouth.

And how old was he when he came, do you know?

No, but I can figure it out.

We can do that after.

Well, he started to work at the mine in 1904.

Did he ever talk to you about his work on the mine?

Oh, yes! many times. But as kids, you don't pay enough attention to details. But we did know the story of him almost dying from lack of water and walking and walking and walking. The other man did die, but my father was strong.

Where was he walking?

He was trying to get to the Berlin Mine.

In other words, when we got off the train?

Well, yeah, he was two hundred miles away. He was supposed to get off in Reno.

Oh, my!

And not speaking any English, the conductor didn't bother to look at their tickets.

Oh my, so he had to walk.

Sixty-four miles, or something like that, he had to walk.

Oh my! Now, did he stay and work at that mine for a while?

Yes, until it closed, I believe. Then he herded sheep for about thirteen months.

Where was that?

In the Austin area.

Do you know if he went to mining in the Austin area?

Not after that one mine, no. He had a bar in Austin, but I don't think he was the bartender. He also had one in Battle Mountain. But he was more interested in the earth and trying to make a living.

It was a hard time?

Yeah.

When did he meet your mother?

I can't tell you. But my mother, when she came, she came directly to Golconda. She must have had someone tell her that's a good place to come for work, because she worked in a hotel.

Did she come with her parents, or by herself?

By herself

Oh, that was a brave woman in those days!

Well, either that, or you just have a very sad life.

Did she have a sad life back in their country?

No work, you know. This country had so much to offer.

Uh-huh, especially that time period. Do you know where they met and where they lived when they first married?

They lived in Battle Mountain. We were all born in Battle Mountain. They had nine children.

Did your father come down to Battle Mountain from Austin?

Yeah, he had this bar here. But he loved ranching and cattle, and somehow or other he got started in cattle and finally had a nice little herd built up.

So they married in Battle Mountain, and I understand you had a large family. Where were you in the line-up of all the kids?

Well, let's see, two died when we were young—we didn't even know them. So I always kind of call our family of seven, and I was right in the middle. But of course we have lost three since—there's only four left.

Now I want your story, and I got Carmen's [Mary's sister Carmen Hinman], so I want from your very earliest recollections—whether that was before elementary school, or during—what life in your household was like.

Well, with a big family like ours, it seemed like my mother was cooking all the time. And during the Depression, we didn't even know there was a Depression, because we didn't ever have anything fancy we just had good old food. We had a *wonderful* life, playing with each other. And our oldest sister must have had the toughest life, learning to speak English. And of course the older ones helped the younger ones with their lessons and with

their catechism and whatever. We really had a wonderful life: I wouldn't trade it for *anything*.

Oh, how wonderful to hear that! What were some of the chores you had to do?

Oh, feed the chickens, gather the eggs, go get the cows. [laughter] The cows were kind of turned out to eat grass and stuff, because hay was expensive, and we had milk cows.

Was that right at your house in Battle Mountain?

Well, yeah. We were out not quite on the city limits.

So there was a little more land around your place?

Yeah. And the house is still there. It's been sold, but it's still there.

Did you milk the cow?

Oh, no, that was my mother's job.

[laughing] *Oh, she milked the cow?*

She always did.

I understand that you were musical.

Yes, mom said I started about five years old, playing, and I really enjoyed it. Carmen took music lessons, and my sister *Juanita*—I don't know if she did or not—but she could play a little bit by ear. And I didn't *want* to take music lessons, because it seemed like it would be difficult for me. So I played and played for dances when I got to be seventeen or eighteen.

What would you do? listen to a record and then know how to just play it by ear?

Oh, well, I wasn't *that* wonderful, but it would be okay.

You were able to do that?

Yeah.

Now, when you said you played for dances, where were the dances held?

Well, we went as far as Midas [chuckles] and Beowawe [chuckles].

To go to dances?

To play for dances.

SA. *Oh, you would play!*

And Battle Mountain, and Copper Canyon.

Were you paid to do this?

Oh sure.

So you made some money?

Maybe ten dollars.

How old were you when you were doing this?

[sighs] Oh, in high school, I suppose: sixteen on up.

Oh, what fun! Do you have any pictures of yourself at the piano, or playing the piano at dances?

No, I don't

I bet you were popular!

Oh! I don't know. It sure came in handy. Mom said, "Let Mary play the piano, and the rest of you have to do the dishes]" [laughter] So that was swell!

What were some of the songs that you played for the dances in those days? Do you remember?

Oh, just all the old-time songs.

Well, people today don't know the old-time songs. Can you remember any that you especially liked to play?

No, I can't

Who would take you to play at these dances?

My husband, Dick Marvel.

But you weren't married at sixteen.

No. He played the drums.

Oh, he played in the little band together?

Uh-huh.

Oh, for goodness sakes! Was that before you married, too?

Yes, that was before we were married.

Oh, what fun! So is that how you met?

Well, we started in first grade together.

Oh, you grew up together.

Grew up together.

So let's go back into your household and tell me about your dad as you were growing up, what he was like, and what kind of work he did through your early years.

Well, as I mentioned before, he got into the cattle business, and so he was gone a lot.

Where was this ranch?

Well, it was north of Valmy, or someplace in that area

Was it his leased ranch, or did he work for someone else?

No, he worked for himself And then he did lease government land, sometimes, for hay.

Did you ever go out to the ranch?

Oh yeah.

What did you do there?

Well, not a heck of a lot!

Did you ride the horses?

No.

No horses there?

Yeah, but we didn't have that many horses.

Did you work?

Well, yeah—helped with the cooking or whatever had to be done.

Was there any structure there, where he would sleep when he went out there?

Oh yeah, there were two little hous one up on the hill, and one...

Did your mom go there sometimes?

Well, Mom would go, and my older sister would stay home and be "mom" here, to the kids that were here. So we always felt we had two moms. [laughter]

Were there some Basque culture celebrations or customs that you observed in your household that we might want to know about?

Well, no, other than Basque food—we certainly had plenty of that.

Describe some of the meals that were typical Basque.

Well, garlic soup. I wish I could make it. Mom always made stews that had a good flavor, arid she used lots of garlic and onions, lots of tomatoes. Sometimes if there was a shortage of meat she would make a sauce of tomatoes and onions and let it cook for a long time, and then put eggs in it—let eggs simmer in it—and that was the main dish.

Break it open?

Break an egg open.

Oh, I never heard of that. That's interesting.

It's good, very good.

Were there any special holidays that were Basque and not American that you might have celebrated?

No, not really.

Was Basque spoken in the home?

Oh yes. Mom spoke Basque all the time, and we'd answer in English.

[laughs] You understood it then?

Yeah. My dad said, "I'm in America and I'm an American," so he talked English to us, and Mom would get so mad at him! *[laughter]* But English became more prominent then, as we got older, so the older ones in the family spoke Basque, but when it gets down to me and... We understand it, though, so that's something.

Was there a Basque community that got together where they could speak the language together?

Oh yes, there were three big families in Battle Mountain: the Belausteguis, the Mendives, and our family. And the Ancho family too. It wasn't as big as ours. Oh yeah, they'd meet on Sundays and visit, and always talk about Spain.

Oh how nice!

And then they get over to Spain and they talk about *this* country! *[laughter]* My mother made two trips to Spain, so that was nice, and my father one.

How old were you when she went back?

Oh, I was married!

Oh, she went when you were all grown up?

She went with another sister.

And she had family still there?

Her mother was alive, and there were two brothers, I believe, on *that* trip.

Was she homesick for her home and family? Did she ever talk about that?

Well, yes. But you know, they're awful brave, just to leave. They don't know if they're ever going to go back or not.

Did any of her family members come here to visit?

A brother.

Did he stay, or just visit?

He stayed a long time, because he worked here. He worked for the Jenkins Company in the sheep.

Your husband's family.

Yeah, and then he went back to stay.

Did you ever get to go to visit [your family in Spain]?

No, I was the only one in the family—no, my brother didn't go either. I've just never been that well—I've always had bad feet.

Oh, I'm sorry. It's a hard trip, too. And if you're not feeling well.

You have to be strong.

I'm sorry to hear that. Now I want to ask you about your recollection of what Battle Mountain was like in that early period.

Well, there was *not* much here. In fact, this house—we moved this house here in 1950.

From?

From a ranch near the Getchell Mine out of Winnemucca. And gosh, there weren't many houses here then. In fact, rabbits would come and look for grass, the closest place, and we'd have them in our yard every night. There were that few homes in this area So it has built up quite a bit. And I always think that the kids are so much luckier, in a way, than we were: they have sports of *every* kind at school.

You didn't have any of that?

We had basketball, and a tennis court. They have so much now. *They* don't think they do, but I *know* they do. [laughter]

Where did you go to do your shopping for clothes?

Catalog.

Through Sears and others?

Sears and Wards.

Was there any movie theater or dance place in town?

The movie theater was the dance place! [laughter] Move the chairs! [laughter]

Did you see movies there? Was that exciting when that came?

Oh, well, where else do you go? There's only one place to go. Of course it was exciting. And now we don't have any at all. But we have TV.

When you were growing up, did you go into places like Winnemucca or Elko with your family to do any shopping?

No, because my dad never owned a decent car, couldn't afford one, that's for sure.

The roads weren't very good then?

Oh, it'd take forever to get there!

So was your life pretty much confined to Battle Mountain and the ranch?

Yeah, it was, but we never thought of anything else.

You didn't know.

No! Happy as can be! [laughter] I still look back and think, "Oh, I wish I could do it again." [laughter] Fun.

Now, tell me about school when you started. What was school like when you were first in grammar school?

Well, I started when I was five. I wasn't supposed to, but in those days they didn't check much. [laughter] So I graduated when I was seventeen. We had two classes in a room, and it didn't bother a bit. We were used to it and one teacher did it all, the whole thing.

How many kids in your class?

We graduated with eighteen kids, and that was a big class.

And in your elementary days—two classes—how many would there be?

Well, I would say around that number. But that was a big class. My oldest sister graduated with four.

Oh my goodness!

Three boys and her.

Did you like school?

Yeah, I did, I enjoyed it.

What were the subjects you liked?

Well, I always liked math pretty well. I liked English and spelling.

In your classroom was there a mixture of different children? Were there Mexicans and Indians?

Not as much. The Indians had a separate school in those days.

All through high school too?

Well, no, they didn't have high school.

Then did they join you for high school?

Yeah.

Did they keep up with the grades?

Oh yeah.

Through their own school where they started, and they kept up?

Yeah, they did well. We didn't have many Mexicans in those days.

Was it from the railroad workers that they came?

Uh-huh, almost all of them were.

Then as you were growing up and getting into high school, was that ninth grade?

Yeah.

Tell me a little bit about the high school years—first at the school. Did you have music there? Did you play the piano at school for any functions?

I did for masquerades, played marches. I don't remember whether that was high school years or after. I know I did *after*.

What's masquerades?

Well, Halloween, you know, when they dress up in costume. In those days the smaller kids would march around and they'd pick the winner, and the next one. So that's what I did.

In high school, what subjects did you take that you particularly began to have a deeper interest in? Did you begin to develop some special interests?

Well, not really. I didn't even plan on going to school. You don't think about those things—it costs money. But I did go away to business school.

Oh, you mean after high school?

Yeah.

Where did you go?

I went to Sacramento.

How did you decide on Sacramento?

Well, because there was a very [chuckles] talkative lady that came to Mom's house. [laughter] And she started talking about this beautiful campus, you know, and get you interested in boys and stuff. There was not

even a campus! [laughter] What a gal she was! But there was another girl from Battle Mountain—her mother wanted her to go if I got to go. So she and I both went, and we lived together, and my older sister moved there too. So we all stayed together.

Was that exciting, to leave here?

Oh yes, my goodness! Went to school about eighteen months.

Now, did someone drive you, or was there a bus? How'd you get from Battle Mountain to Sacramento?

You know, I have no idea. I can't remember. I've been thinking about that, and I can't remember.

You said you got an apartment?

Uh-huh.

How were you able to do that after just living in Battle Mountain? That was pretty brave.

You mean financially?

No, how did you say, "I'm going to go and I'm going to find an apartment"? [laughs]

Well, that's the only way you can live is finding a place to live. I remember our apartment cost thirty dollars a month. But that was a lot of money. My sister helped me out financially, and I paid her back, after I worked.

Was it kind of scary at first to do that, to go away from home?

No. I got very homesick though. I had to come home on a train.

When you went to Sacramento to business school, what was the business school like? What courses did you take?

Well, a lot more typing and shorthand. And then the machines, those big awkward things, you know, what they used to look like. And that's about all. Brush you up on what you learned in high school, to do better.

Did you develop a social life there?

Well [chuckles], in those days, no one had any money—girls or boys—and there were quite a group of boys from Carson that went, and they were in the same boat that we were. So we spent our time at the park, and maybe had enough money for a cone or something, and just have our own fun, you know. They were nice kids.

So did you go home for the summer, or go straight through?

Kept on going until it was over.

Did you say a year-and-a-half?

Yeah, about a year-and-a-half.

So then you came back home. Were you tempted to stay in Sacramento to work?

I *did* work in Sacramento. Let's see, how much did I make? I've forgotten—not much.

What did you do?

Well, it was strictly shorthand and typing.

For what kind of firm?

Retail credit company.

And how long did you do that?

Oh, I was there probably a couple of years.

Oh you were?! So you developed a kind of a life there?

Uh-huh.

What brought you back home to Battle Mountain?

Well, there was a little five-and-ten-cent store in Battle Mountain in a little building that doesn't exist now—it's where the telephone building is now. And the boy that had it wanted to sell. So my mother thought that would be a good project for me. So I came home to that.

And then what did you do?

I stayed with it for a while. I didn't think I was going to go anyplace there...And I worked for the State Highway [Department], weighing trucks. They gave you subsistence and a very decent wage. I worked for the Rationing Board—that was during the war.

Oh, so because of your training, you were very well qualified?

Well, there wasn't too many around then, you know, that might have been interested in it.

And you lived at home?

Yeah, I lived at home.

How did it feel to come back to live at home after being independent and being on your own?

Didn't bother me at all!

It didn't? Good.

No, I knew what I was coming back to. It didn't bother me at all.

Sure. And when you were gone, you were gone about two-and-a-half years. Were there changes in Battle Mountain when you got back?

No, not that much.

And what year was that by then?

Well, I graduated in 1938 from high school.

So 1941, 1942?

Well, yeah.

The war was starting?

The war was starting. Dick was in the Service.

Were you going together yet?

Yeah, off and on—you know how it goes. And we corresponded. He was injured badly in the war. And then he was sent from a different hospital to Auburn, California And then he called his mother and she said, "We're going to come see you," and he said, "You bring Mary!" [laughter]

So he had his eye on you!

So Mary went! [laughter] And then we were engaged, and he never went back after that—he was too badly hurt, you know. So we were married [December 27,] 1944.

And where did you get married?

Right here in this church right here.

Oh, that little Catholic church right there?

Uh-huh.

Where did you go to live as a married couple?

Well, he wasn't...

They didn't dismiss him?

No, not from the hospital. He had to go out-patient, so we went back to Auburn until he was well enough to be discharged.

How long was that?

Oh, not really a long time. A few months, I guess.

Was he in the hospital?

No, just out-patient treatment.

So you could live together and he could get treatment?

Uh-huh.

How long were you there, several months?

Yes.

You didn't have to work there, I hope.

No. I would have, if I could. [chuckles]

But you had time together.

Oh yes.

Then he was discharged and you came back here. Where did you live?

Well we lived with his mother, upstairs. There was nobody up there but the two of them.

Where was that house?

It's across the track. Do you know where Carmen's is?

Oh yes, I was just there.

Okay, it's in that same block. It's that big house with white pillars. Did you notice that?

Oh yes!

Lovely place—it was.

So you lived upstairs?

Yeah.

When you lived there, tell me a little about the kind of life you both were living when you first came back.

Well, Dick was not supposed to work very hard, but he did—you couldn't keep him down!—driving truck and stuff like that. There's always a lot of lifting. But it was nice, we didn't mind it. How do you live with your in-laws? It's wonderful, I don't have to do anything! [laughter] She had an Indian lady do her laundry. I tried to help as much as I could, but you know, she was used to hiring everything done.

So it was just four of you there: your mother-and father-in-law and Dick and you?

Yeah. And then our daughter was born not long after we were married.

What is your daughter's name?

Marsha

First baby?

First baby, first Marvel grandchild.

I'll bet the grandparents were thrilled!

Oh, when we moved, I thought they were going to absolutely die! [laughter]

Now, when you moved into that house, were they already big ranchers?

Oh, my yes!

And I read some fascinating things about your mother-in-law, wishing I could have interviewed her. So tell me, from your close relationship, about her as a woman. We'll get to your father-in-law later. I'm interested to know about him, too.

Well, actually, she was a very good friend of mine before I ever married into the family.

Really?!

Oh yeah. You know, all ages loved her. She had a big library.

In her home?

In her home.

Had you been in the home a lot before you married?

Oh my, yes. Sure, Dick and I would play together with all the kids, and then we'd go there and play with all his beautiful toys.

So this was life-long.

It wasn't like I was going into something I didn't know anything about. And my father-in-law was darling. He used to make me play the piano, and I'd die a thousand deaths. [laughs]

Let's go back to your mother-in-law first, and then we'll move to your father-in-law. Tell me—because when you read an article, it's just a cold article—tell me about her from your relationship and your knowing her, so I can get a feel for the woman.

Well, it's hard to find a person quite like her. She had *all* kinds of friends, young and old. And she was just so good-hearted. She helped so many people during the hard times, and having the ranch and potatoes and stuff like that. She'd always see that they had something to eat. And she worked herself—she worked in the office, but always had time to visit. If you went, she'd just stop and visit.

Where was the office?

It was in the house. It was a separate little place, but it was in the house.

Did you start to work at all in their company?

No. I used to pay the men when she was gone for a few days. If they were haying or something, I used to take care of the men when they'd come in after their money, is all.

Was she in full charge of the office?

Yes.

A very capable woman?

Oh yeah.

You said there was an Indian servant?

When the kids were growing up, they had a black lady that did all the cooking and took care of them and everything. Dick could tell you that. This Indian lady is still alive, but she's getting so old. Her name is Jessie. She did all the cleaning and maybe peeled potatoes, or did some things like that for dinner. And then they had *another* Indian lady that was in charge of the washing and ironing. And that was in a little wash house on the grounds, in the back of the house. It's not there now. So she always had to have help, because she was too busy.

Oh, yeah!

And it was a big house.

Now tell me about your father-in-law.

Oh, he was a great guy! [laughter] He was a very likeable person. He was wonderful. He loved the grandchildren—oh my goodness! And he visited. My mother-in-law was not a visitor—you could go see her, but she never had time to visit much—especially in later life. She was not so bad in her early life. But my father-in-law, he'd make the rounds and visit.

He loved people?

Oh yes, and people liked him too—he was really a nice guy.

*Did he work real hard on the ranch himself?
Or when you lived there was he...*

Oh, he was more of a supervisor. He'd go visit the ranches, see what they needed, and see what needed to be done. And then Dick also did the same thing—but he worked too hard. You know, Dick works too hard. He wasn't going to ask somebody to lift something, when he was a big, strong guy.

So when you had your first child, you all lived in the house there?

Yeah. In fact, we celebrated her [Marsha's] second birthday in that house. And then we bought an older house on Third Street here in Battle Mountain. We moved there, and I'll never forget the first day—Marsha started to get her coat about five o'clock, and said, "Let's go home now." [laughter] Oh, my goodness!

She liked living there?

Oh yeah. She was just "it," the first grandchild.

Of course you were still very close, so I guess there were daily visits back and forth. How did it feel to have your own house and the responsibilities?

I was always used to working and cleaning, and I liked gardening. It wasn't a *new* place by any means, but I just enjoyed it very, very much.

So in that period, what was Dick doing?

He was with the W.C. Jenkins Company—that's the name of the family business, and he was always with the sheep part: they had

sheep and cattle, but he always was with the sheep end of it.

Was he a shepherd?

No, he'd visit the camps and see how they're getting along and talk to them about where the feed is good and where they're going to go, and get their orders.

A big responsibility?

Oh yeah.

Did you ever go with him?

Oh, many times. I took lots of movies.

Did you?! Do you have any?

I don't know where they are! [chuckles]

I'll have to ask Dick to look, because it's important.

I have them of shearing, and docking lambs.

Oh my! That's very important.

Had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to get there for that.

So tell me, that was a hobby of yours? Tell me how you got started.

Because I had a little girl! I had to take pictures every time she changed her dress. [laughter]

So you got that movie camera when your little girl was born?

Uh-huh.

Then you started to go out and take pictures of the business?

Yeah. Beautiful country and everything.

Oh, we've got to find it, so if we ever do a video, we can use part of the movie in it. That's so important. So you were busy with your home and your daughter and taking movies. You probably visited your family a lot with your little girl.

Oh yes.

Did she get lost in the crowd with all of them? [laughs]

[laughs] No, I visited my mother every day that I could. So she was just a little ways down the road from my mother-in-law.

Oh my! So you had a very lucky daughter who had all of this wonderful family!

That's what she says. She says, "I was so lucky." I say, "Yeah, you were."

Oh, that's wonderful. And she also had different cultures that's so wonderful, with the Basque and then the Welsh. Did your in-laws have any customs from their country?

No, they didn't.

Thoroughly Americanized, lost some of their...

I don't even know what their customs are, those people.

No, I don't know either. Were they any Basque customs? The music?

Yeah, we had records.

Are there any records left?

Oh, no, there's no records left. But my mother used to dance.

Did she?!

And my oldest sister could dance. Oh, she was really a *true* Basque girl, my oldest sister—she's dead.

Did you get any movies of that?

Oh, no, that was before I had a camera.

And no records left?

No.

None. That's a shame.

I don't know if there'd be anything to *play* them on!

That's true. I would be the old [style], with the needle. That's a shame.

I imagine *someplace* there are still those same records. Sure. I think they probably play them at the Basque festivals, I don't know.

I'll find out. I'm going to the Winnemucca Basque Festival—the first I've ever had the opportunity to attend! Alright, so then take me a little bit through your early married life. You moved into your house. Did you have any more children?

I had a son, he's forty-two now. He's about five years younger than Marsha And then he was an Rh baby.

Oh, with the blood disorder, the Rh factor?

We didn't know it until he was twelve days old, I believe, and he just had turned yellow. He was dying, inch by inch. And we had a priest from the old country, and he went to the doctor and said, "There's something wrong with that Marvel baby." So anyway, we made a flying trip with him to Salt Lake, and he had to have a transfusion, and he just got all pink and cute. We stayed three days. He didn't have to have a complete change of blood—sometimes they do. And then we had to go back one more time for a little booster.

Did he come out okay?

Yeah. Had his blood checked every day, in his little heel.

Ooo!

And it would keep going down, down, down.

Oh, until he was okay. How did your little girl, Marsha, take to her new little brother?

Oh, just fine! Of course they hear about it for a long-enough time. [chuckles] They know they're going to get *something*, a boy or a girl. They didn't know [then] like they know *now*. [laughter]

Did she kind of try to help with him? She was five years older.

Go get a diaper or something like that. She was a good little girl. In fact, both the kids were so good.

I'll bet the family was happy to have a little girl and then a little boy.

Yeah, but in the meantime, one of Dick's brothers got married, and *they* had a boy, so there were two grandchildren. And then my boy came after that. And *that* family, Dick's family, had *seven* children, so there were *many*, many grandchildren.

Oh, my goodness. Did they live here in Battle Mountain as well?

They lived at the Twenty-five Ranch.

How far is that?

Well, maybe fifteen miles.

So did you all get together?

Oh yes.

Did your family and his family—did you have big things where you all got together?

No, not really. My mother would visit Mrs. Marvel, you know, after church or something like that.

What did you do when it came to a holiday? Which family would you go to? Did you start a custom?

Well, we usually spent Christmas Eve at Mrs. Marvel's, and then the next day she wanted to be left alone. [laughter]

Good! So you could go to the other?

Yeah. So many times I had Christmas dinner here, and I had *my* parents. We never left them alone, that's for sure.

So you kind of divided. What about Thanksgivings?

Same thing. Thanksgiving was not as big a day, you know, as Christmas. But if we didn't eat at Mom's, we ate here or at Mrs. Marvel's or someplace.

So now you're busy with the two children. What was life like?

Fine! We moved into this house in 1950, from that other house.

When your son was born, you lived here?

Yes.

What was this house like when you bought it?

It was just like it is now, except for this addition.

The room that we're in? this little dining room?

Yeah. This house was square.

So the dining room that we're sitting in and that wing?

Uh-huh. There's a little office and a half bath there, and a closet.

You moved in here because your family was growing?

Well, I didn't expect to stay in that older house all my life. You know, you could put a lot of money in it and never really *still* have what you want. And this house came up for sale. We went and looked at it and thought, "Gee, that would be nice." [laughs]

It's a wonderful home.

Yeah.

It has an upstairs?

Yeah.

And a beautiful balcony.

Uh-huh. Two bedrooms upstairs, and a bathroom. There isn't a lot of bedroom space for the size of the house. I have a couch that makes into a bed in this little room.

How did you arrange for your son and daughter? Did they share a room?

Yes, they did until they...Let's see, Marsha went away to school. In her freshman year she went to St. Mary's in Salt Lake City. She was interested in music—she had taken music lessons here—but there was nothing else for her. That's why I say, now, there's so much to offer.

Oh, she took after you! She was musical.

Well, she sings.

She sings?! Now, let me go back and bring your kids through school a little bit. Your kids went to the grammar school, and then did she start showing her interest in music real early?

Yes, she did. And I thought, my gosh, she'll be so homesick and everything. But she said, "No, I want to go."

Oh, she wanted to go.

Oh, heavens, I look at it now and I think, "How did we do it?! Send a thirteen-year-old kid."

And how did you hear about the school, St. Mary's, in Salt Lake?

There were some girls from Battle Mountain there, but they were in their last year.

Oh, so she was a pretty independent daughter?

Yes, she was.

Tell me about her.

Well, she wanted to learn more about playing the piano and about singing. There just wasn't the opportunity here.

So she went for her junior and senior year?

She went *four* years, started as a freshman.

In ninth grade?

Uh-huh. We'd call and talk to her every Sunday. [chuckles]

That must have been hard.

Yes. [chuckles]

Did you go up there to visit?

Yeah, some.

That's pretty independent, for a girl to do that.

Yeah, really.

Did she always show this independence?

Well, I think she likes to talk to Mom and Pop more right now [chuckling] than she ever did! [laughter] She's divorced now.

Where is she living?

Reno.

So she went up there. Did she develop sort of a career in her singing?

Well, she graduated, came back here and taught one year.

Music?

Yes, she had a music chair, she did a good job. But then she became engaged.

Where did she meet the fellow?

At the University of Nevada.

Oh, she went to the University of Nevada?

Yeah. She graduated from there.

After she finished high school, she went to the University of Nevada at Reno.

Yeah, and got her teaching degree.

And lived in Reno.

Yeah, lived in Reno for four years, then came here and taught a year.

I see. And then she had already met this fellow?

Yes.

How old was she when she got married?

Well, let's see, I suppose twenty-one or twenty-two.

Where did they live?

In Reno.

Did she have children?

She couldn't have children, she adopted two boys. I think she really would have liked the second one to have been a girl, but she just couldn't turn down that little face when she saw it! [chuckles] So she has two boys.

What are their names?

Jeffrey, Richard, and Travis Christopher. Their last name is Grant.

And how old are the boys now?

Jeffrey is nineteen, and Travis is sixteen.

Tell me about your son, where he went to school and what he did after school.

Well, he graduated—couldn't have sent him away to school, he was too much for sports! And besides, we thought, "How did we ever send that kid away to school at thirteen?!" He graduated from the University of Nevada with a degree in agriculture.

He went though high school here and graduated from the university?

Yes. And he wasn't that fond of school, but he finally did graduate. He could have been an "A" student, if he'd wanted to.

What did he like? What were his interests?

Just to get on a ranch or something like that. So we have a feed lot.

What's a feed lot?

Where you feed cattle for fattening cattle. It's about eleven miles out of Winnemucca. And so he's there with his wife and two boys.

Now who comes to the feed lot? I don't understand that.

Well, people bring their cattle to be fed.

Do they leave them there, for grazing?

No, you have to feed them this mixture of different things. This is for fattening cattle, so they have to have more than just hay.

So they bring them there, instead of taking the food back to where they...

Oh, no, they bring them there and they stay there, they have corrals.

Okay, they stay in the corrals. Describe it, because those of us who aren't ranchers don't know about feed lots. Tell me a little more about that.

Well, they can eat all sorts of things, but they have to be figured out rations and their protein and all this stuff.

Do they grow special feed there?

No, we have to buy it.

And how big a place, and how many [head of cattle]?

Well, if we had 3,000 head of cattle, we could take care of them easily.

Really?! So it's huge?

That's small. It's really a small place.

And so he runs that and they have a house on that?

Yes. Yes, they have a house.

Okay, so we've got your boy up to date, and your girl up to date. Now let's get back to you. Your children left the household. Then tell me about once they're away, what your life was like.

Well, in 1964 or something like that, we built eight apartments, right across the alley from us. And we already owned three houses. And in about six months, we bought four more apartments that were already built. So we were in the rental business pretty big. In fact, we have been, all these years.

Is that your domain, in charge of the rentals?

Yeah. In fact, Dick was hardly around then. You know, he was busy with his own thing; So I just more or less did it by myself. I was strong then.

So tell me, who would move into these apartments and houses?

People that are looking for a place to live. The mining boom was on.

So this is a whole new area that I want to explore. By handling that, you knew first-hand the changes in Battle Mountain.

Oh, definitely! That's why we built them, because the first big mine started.

Let's go, first, before you built them, when the mines were starting, and you hadn't built it yet,

tell me about how Battle Mountain handled this influx.

Trailers.

Which mine was opening?

Well, it was Duval then. It was called Duval—it's Battle Mountain Gold now.

How many people would be hired and start coming in?

Oh, gosh, they had a great big payroll. I don't know what...

Hundreds?

Oh yeah. And then the barite was good then too.

What years are we talking about?

Well, from the time we built, 1965.

Would they first hire people who lived here?

Some.

And then how did they get other people?

Oh, my goodness, they'd come from everywhere. There just wasn't the work everyplace. Like Washington, Idaho, a lot of Idaho people moved in here.

Would it be a lot of families, or a lot of single men, or both?

Both. We rented to a lot of young, single men.

So you had the vision, both of you, of seeing this?

Well, Dick was a county commissioner then. They more or less were looking for people that wanted to make the investment. And we had just sold all the ranches and everything and had some money, and we thought, "Well, we can't quit now [chuckling], we're too young!" So that's why we built them.

So when you built them, they were your own?

Yeah, just nobody else but ours.

Now, when you were going to build the apartments, did you have an idea of what you wanted, or did you hire an architect to design them for you?

No, Carmen's son-in-law is a contractor.

Oh, good!

He built four apartments at the same time—we later bought them. And so he had the plans. They're simple—just two-bedroom. So he had the plans and we said we'll make eight. So that's why he made the four. So it was worth his time to come to do twelve.

And did they rent quickly?

Oh yes! My goodness, we had a waiting list before they were finished.

Where would you advertise?

Never advertised in the paper in those days. Just word of mouth. And then I would put [notices] on the laundromats. They were so busy in those days, laundromats.

Oh, where the miners would do their laundry?

Uh-huh.

And when you first built them, how long, while the mines were busy, would they stay?

Well, the young people would stay a long time.

What's a "long time"?

Well, a year. And then somebody would quit, they were foolish, and quit to go someplace else or something. If they had families and were really interested in making a decent life for themselves, they were looking for something to buy, as soon as they could accumulate enough.

And what about the houses that you rented? That was for families?

No, just two one-bedroom houses. In fact, we have just leased ad of our properties to a man—hopefully he'll buy them.

How long did this go along where it was easy to rent and you didn't have any empty places? How long did the mines go that you had no problem renting?

Well, it's not bad right now.

You're still renting?

Well, no, we don't

And never did.

Yeah. He has vacancies, but he doesn't have to, if he'd get with it.

So in other words, you never really had a lot of vacancies?

Well, no.

What were the rents then?

Started out at \$150, and ended at \$300.

Did it have a refrigerator and stove in it?

Yes. And we started out furnished.

Oh, my goodness!

Drapes and everything.

Did you have problems where any of them would be kind of ruined or messed up?

Oh yes, terrible people. Some of them are just...You can't believe what they do and how they live.

So you had a lot of problems with it?

Oh yeah. And I used to do the cleaning myself.

Oh no!

Yes I did! Then I got to the point where it was hard to get somebody to clean. *Then* my trouble started. By that time, Dick was pretty free, and he's cleaned plenty himself. [chuckles]

You mean it was hard to find people who needed work to clean?

Well yes, because they all worked at the mines and they want so much money—They get spoiled!

Oh my goodness.

I'm paying a girl seven dollars an hour right now.

Oh my goodness! I think that's high!

Pretty good money, I think—for not hard work.

I think so too, very good. Did you say you leased them? What year?

Uh-huh, we leased them in January.

Just this past year?

Uh-huh.

I'd like to learn a little more about your mom and dad. You children now were gone. What were mom and dad doing?

Well, we lost my brother when he was a young man, 1952. And of course my dad *depended* on him, in his cattle business, because he was able to do the hard work. So he couldn't handle it for very long, and he finally sold his cattle. And then from then on, his retirement was a big garden.

What did he raise?

Everything: too many potatoes and too much of everything, but each year he'd get a smaller place going. But he loved it.

Did he bring you over fresh vegetables all the time?

No, I'd go over *there* and get them.
[chuckles]

That was great.

And my mother's life wasn't much different. She was constantly cooking for us kids. She'd call me up and say, "I have some sweet rice." Now that's a Basque dish.

Oh! What's in it?

No much but rice and milk—started out with water—and milk, and maybe a cinnamon stick, and sugar.

Oh, it's like a rice pudding.

Oh, it's good!

It sounds so delicious. She was used to cooking for a crowd?

Yeah. She cooked some wonderful meatballs. Or garlic soup. I remember the last garlic soup she made—it was just so bad it just wasn't good. She made it for my daughter, Marsha, because she loved it so much.

Were all the kids gone from the house by then?

Yeah. But there was always somebody coming and going. But her last years were lonely. You know, there just wasn't anybody around much.

Did they live a long life?

Yes, my mother was eight-six, and my father was eighty-eight.

Were they living in Battle Mountain when they passed away?

Uh-huh, in the same house, and they both died in the hospital here in Battle Mountain.

That leads me into another area I wanted to explore: over the years, the health care in Battle Mountain. I think you said your son had to go to another hospital when he had the Rh factor?

Well yes. Even Elko, I don't think, *right now* could handle anything like that. They *might*, but I don't know. We had to go to Salt Lake.

Where did you have your children?

Right here in Battle Mountain.

I understand that now babies can't be born at this hospital. Is that true?

Uh-huh, there's too many regulations. They have to have so many things in case of this, or in case of that.

So they don't allow?

No.

It isn't that the doctors can't perform.

No, no, it's not that. They have to have an anesthesiologist and they have to have all these machines.

In case of Cesarean, in case there has to be surgery?

Well, yeah, in case the child has something, they have to put it on a certain machine or something.

Is it also true that they can't perform surgeries at this hospital?

Well, they say they need an anesthesiologist here.

And they don't have one?

No.

Do you think they will have? Do you think it'll improve?

No, I really don't. You know, Elko's not far away.

How far is Elko?

Seventy-two miles.

Uh-huh, but in emergencies? I guess you're used to it?

Yeah, go in the ambulance. I've done it twice! [laughs]

Oh, honestly? It makes medical health pretty expensive.

Yeah, it is.

But otherwise, do you have good doctors here?

I think they're excellent

How many doctors here?

There's two.

As the city is growing—it has grown, hasn't it?

Uh-huh.

What was the population before the mining?

Oh my, I'll take a guess: maybe 2,000 or something like that.

And now it's over 7,000, I understand.

That's what they say.

And it's still growing, isn't it?

Well, maybe, but pretty slow now. In fact, I think it's big enough. [laughter]

A lot of new people here?

Oh my, I don't know anybody.

You don't know anyone any more?

Uh-uh. And I read the paper, I like to look at the names, and heavens, I don't know, don't recognize any names hardly.

Before Highway 80 was built I understand all the traffic came right through town.

Uh-huh.

And then Highway 80 detoured the people going through the town. How did that affect Battle Mountain?

Well, not being in business, I wouldn't know what to say.

Were you glad, not being in business, that there wasn't so much traffic downtown?

Well, it was kind of dangerous. But right now, there's just as much, because our town has grown.

Is it because they're coming into town to do business, the ones that come into town?

Well, no, they are in town.

Oh, the traffic in town.

Yeah.

The through traffic, then, goes right through and doesn't stop the way they used to, to eat or sleep?

Well, I don't know. It's interesting to be on the highway and see some of them take the off ramp to come in. You don't know what they come in for, but a lot of them do. So you don't know what they need.

Gas? Food? Overnight?

Yeah. I think the motels do well.

I know. I stay at Holiday Inn Express. It's crowded every night.

Is it?!

Uh-huh.

Good!

A lot of workers. And some tourists.

Uh-huh.

What do you think Battle Mountain will be like in the next decade? Do you think mining will continue?

Oh, I don't know. I hardly think so, unless they discover more. I don't know. It'll be interesting to see. They say we need other types of industry here.

Uh-huh, so when that slows, there'll be other things?

Yeah.

Tell me, now, in this stage of your life, you have these grandchildren and beautiful children. What is your life like now?

Well, I should not complain, because Dick is wonderful: he does all the cooking. I have a lady that comes and does the house. He does all the laundry, believe it or not. And even has to help me dress—some things I *can't* do. So I wouldn't exactly call it wonderful. [chuckles] I like to do for myself, but there's some things I can't do any more.

For those who listen to the tape: Is the reason for that because of your arthritis?

Well, yeah, my back. My back has bothered me for years. And then I have two bad knees. I have an artificial right one, and the other one I fell and broke, and a pin is loose in it. I fell *three* times—that's why I'm so careful. I fell twice here in the kitchen and once in the basement. So I don't go upstairs at all—I haven't for years. It tires me out.

How do you spend your time? Are you able to read? Are your eyes okay?

Yes, and I have bookwork, my own personal work, and some feed lot work that Dick doesn't do, I do. And I'm glad I have that to do! [chuckles]

Right. Do you watch television very much?

Not in the morning—maybe late afternoon and night. And evenings, yes, I definitely love my television in the evening.

Do you get out at all?

I can't get out by myself.

Are you able to get in a car and be taken to visit? Or do people come visit you?

I haven't been to my sister's in years, and I just don't like it at all, but...

Do they come here?

Oh yeah.

So you have company. Do you have a lot of friends in Battle Mountain?

Not any more. Not that many.

Are there other things that you like to do, or can do? Do your grandkids come? Do they spend any time? or are they all so busy?

The Reno kids can drive now.

Oh, gosh, time flies!

And in fact, our oldest grandson came and spent three days with us not too long ago. He had a break from the university, and that was nice. And the little one, I would worry if she called up and said, "He's going to come," because he just started driving. He looks like he's a good driver, but...[laughs]

How old is he?

Sixteen. And the other two kids don't drive yet—the ones in Winnemucca. But the whole family was here Sunday.

Oh, for Mother's Day, yes. And Marsha, your very beautiful daughter, what is she doing now?

She teaches. She got her master's.

Where is she teaching?

At the old elementary school in Sparks.

Is she still singing round? Is she performing?

Well, she teaches music [chuckles], so she has to sing to the kids! [laughs]

Right. But I mean, is she doing any of her own performing with her music?

Well, There's hardly time. She sang in the choir at St. Thomas Aquinas. Did you ever hear that choir?

Yes.

Isn't that a wonderful choir?

Oh yes! She sang with them?

But then, it meant night practices, and it just got to be too much. Of course, after the divorce, she really had to stay home. The kids were too young.

Oh, she divorced when they were small?

No, they've been divorced about four years. But too small to leave alone. You know, "I'm going to go sing, so you guys..."

No, you can't do that.

But they're older now, so she'll go back.

Her voice is still good? She practices?

I just don't get a chance to hear it myself. I think there's no reason why she shouldn't be able to keep it.

Is there anything else that I forgot to ask you, that you might want to share?

Gosh, I didn't know [chuckling] I had such a long life! [both chuckle] Oh, I don't know, I don't think so. You talk about the town and how it's changed: I think the civic center is one of the most wonderful things that ever happened in Battle Mountain. They just have so many things there. They have graduations, they have plays, the Lions have meetings there.

When was it built?

Oh, I can't tell you that.

About how many years ago, do you know?

If I say "ten" that might be too many. The years go by so fast I can't remember. But they say it's too small, they want to build on.

When they built it, was there a vote of Battle Mountain residents? Or was it the Commissioners? Who thought about it?

I can't tell you that either. You'll have to ask Dick, he might know.

So what are the things that they use it for now, or have used it for over the years?

Well any time there's any kind of a function, they go there first. If they can't possibly get in, then they have it at a school or something like that.

Do they rent it out?

I believe so.

What are some of the functions that they might have?

Well, they bring in a lot of entertainment too.

Oh, do they?!

Not expensive entertainment, but things that a small town might enjoy.

Like what?

Well, most of the time it has to do with music and instruments, and maybe a little play or something like that.

Are those local or traveling?

Traveling.

Do they have lectures?

Now, I don't know.

Mainly cultural events?

I think so.

Is it also where organizations might rent it for a big function?

Oh yes.

Have you gone to many things there?

I haven't been in the place very many times, really, but I have been in there, and it's very nice. They even had my mother-in-law's funeral there, it was so *big*. And I think there's been a couple of others since. But I was thinking, "My gosh, *where* could they have had her funeral?!"

Oh, whenever there's a big crowd, you have a place that you can rent.

Uh-huh.

Is it a place that can be divided so two different things can be going on in it?

I don't believe so.

Does it keep pretty busy?

Oh my yes! The Mexicans use it a lot for their fiestas and their dances.

That's good. And you have a nice little library in town.

Yeah, there's one there.

Can you tell anything about the development of so many more schools here in Battle Mountain?

Well, that's a question to ask Dick, because he was on the school board and county commission a total of twenty years. So he can probably tell you things that I don't know.

Is there anything else that I forgot to ask you, before we end the interview?

I don't know, we've covered quite a lot of things. [both chuckle] I can't think of anything.

Well, if you think of anything, by the time I finish interviewing Dick, or even by my next visit, there's still some space left and we can add it to the tape. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for allowing us to interview you for this project.

You're very welcome.

This is the end of the interview.

MARY O. MARVEL
PHOTOGRAPHS



MARY MARVEL, MAY 15, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



The Old Corner Bar (1911-1918). Originally George Wingfield's Bar, Battle Mountain, Nevada. Behind bar: Bartender Marion Michado and partner; front of the bar - first man Ramon Oyarbide, owner and father of Carmen Hinman and Mary Marvel.

(Original photograph owned by Mary Marvel)

MARY O. MARVEL

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

RICHARD TREHARNE MARVEL**PREFACE**

Richard Marvel's maternal grandfather, William T. Jenkins, was seventeen when he left Wales and traveled to Canada with a background of mining and the sheep business. When the mining ventures proved unsuccessful, he purchased sheep and came down to Nevada about 1865, settling in Lander County where he started a sheep operation, W. T. Jenkins Company. He gradually acquired several ranches, and developed the business into the largest sheep operation in the region. He advertised to the Basque country for sheepherders who played an important role in the expansion of the company.

Mr. Jenkins returned to Wales on a visit and brought back a bride. Richard's mother Louise was born in Battle Mountain in 1899. She met Richard's father, Ernest Marvel, an Army Captain, in San Francisco where she attended a finishing school. After his grandparents died, Richard's parents managed the large company and he and his two younger brothers spent most of their time out on the ranches. They

started working in the hay fields and helping in the sheep camps weekends and summers. Richard went to the University of California, Davis to study agricultural economics, since ranching was always his main interest. He was well prepared to run the sheep ranching for the company, which was so large, each family member had their own division to manage.

Richard was injured in World War II. While recuperating, he married Mary Oyarbide, the high school sweetheart he grew up with. He gradually recuperated and was again running the sheep operation until the family sold the company in 1964. He and Mary started several businesses and real estate ventures, and he and his son started a cattle feed lot out of Winnemucca. Richard also got involved in politics, serving on the school board and county commission.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project,

interviewing Richard Marvel at his home, at 185 East Fourth Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada. The date is May 15, 1993.

Good afternoon, Mr. Marvel. It's a pleasure to be here interviewing you today. Could you please give us your full name?

Richard Marvel: Richard T. Marvel.

And where were you born?

I was born in Winnemucca [Nevada].

And what date?

November 6, 1920.

First I want to ask you about your father's parents, your grandparents on your father's side: Can you tell me their names and where they were born?

Yes. My grandfather's name was Abner Marvel. He was born in Indiana—I don't know the town. My grandmother's name was Ida [Wyland], and she was also born in Indiana

Did they ever come to Nevada?

No.

Would you please tell me about your mother's parents, your grandparents on your mother's side.

My grandfather, William T. Jenkins, came to this country at the age of seventeen. I'm not exactly sure of the date: it was around, I'd say, 1830 or 1840, he came to Canada.

What brought him to Canada?

He came on some type of a mining venture. He was originally a mining man and he didn't have too much success, so he came down to Nevada, through Oregon, and bought sheep and started the outfit in about 1867, I believe it was.

I want to go back a little bit. Did you know your grandfather?

No.

You never met him?

No.

Did you learn anything about how he traveled from Wales and if he came alone or with others?

I really don't know.

Don't know any of that?

No, I don't

And you don't know how soon after he arrived that he came to Nevada?

Well, no, I really don't. I think he was probably in Canada two or three years. And then evidently the sheep business was the money-making thing at the time, so being from the type of background he was from, both mining *and* in Wales, you know, they have a lot of sheep, he purchased these sheep and came into Nevada.

Now, when you say "he purchased the sheep and came into Nevada," do you know where he came when he came to Nevada?

Well, my understanding is that he was up around, oh, Denio, and in the southern

part of Oregon and northern Nevada first. And in those days, they had what they called “tramp sheepmen.” They didn’t own any base lands or anything, they just went with their sheep wherever the feed was good.

Oh, they followed the sheep?

They followed the grass and the seasons—let’s put it that way.

Do you know when he came down into this area of Lander County?

Well, I really don’t know. But I know the year that we sold our business it was in it’s ninety-ninth year, and we sold out in 1964.

Wow!

So what would that put it around 1865.

Tell me about your mother’s mother, your grandmother on your mother’s side.

She was also from Wales. Her name was Edith Williams. After my grandfather had been here a few years, he made a trip back to Wales to visit, and he met her, and they were married, and she came over with him.

He didn’t know her before he left?

He may have known the family, but I’m not sure.

Do you know how long he stayed in Wales before he married her and brought her back?

Well I think he was there just for a short visit, because he had this business here and he had to get back. I know there are stories

that he *did* know her, knew of the family, so he went back to find himself a bride. You know, that was very common in those days.

Did you know your grandma?

No.

You never knew her either?

No, she died in the flu epidemic of 1918.

Oh dear! So first tell me about your mother: when she was born?

She [Louise Jenkins] was born August 2, 1899.

And where was that?

That was here in Battle Mountain.

Tell me about your father: where was he born?

He [Ernest Marvel] was born in [Warsaw,] Indiana in 1892.

Where did your mother and father meet?

They met in San Francisco. She was going to Miss Hamlin’s finishing school, and he was an Army captain, stationed at the Presidio.

Oh, that’s interesting! And where did they marry?

They were married, I believe, in San Francisco.

What year was that?

That was in 1918, I believe.

Did they come to Nevada soon after?

Yes. What happened, my grandmother had had some people helping her run the outfit, and when she died in 1918, I guess things started to be mismanaged, so friends got ahold of mother and told her that she and her husband had better come back and see if they couldn't straighten things out. So my father resigned his commission and they came back and took over managing the outfit.

Now, let's go back a little bit. When you say "the outfit," by then, what was the outfit?

That was the W.T. Jenkins Company which my grandfather had started. It was mainly a sheep operation.

Can you describe what it was like in the early years? I know it developed to a much larger company, but do you know anything about what it was like when your mom and dad helped them with it?

Well, when Mother and Dad took it over, they had already acquired several ranches—which ones, I'm not exactly sure.

Where were they?

They were here locally. They were ranches north of Battle Mountain and several south of town here.

Was this the first time your mom and dad came down to this area?

Well, the problem was, Dad, never having had this type of a background, it was real hard on *him*. They had to really rely on a lot of the old-time employees to help them, and of course they were able to hire some pretty good people to help them until Dad learned it. Mother, not having too much of

a background, but what everybody admired about her was the fact that she got in there and rolled up her sleeves and really learned the office end of it—you know, the management skills. And Dad the same way. The problem Dad had was, when he first came back there were so many of the old-time people working here that were resentful of a young Army captain coming back and more or less being their boss. And it took several years before he could really get command of things.

Did your father tell you much from his experience what it was like when he came back until he kind of got used to the work? Did he tell you much?

Yes, like he used to say, "I was just kind of on my own. I would have to take off in my car and start out looking for things because nobody really wanted to tell me [where they were]." But he did have—I can't remember their names—but they were a couple of real old Basque fellows that had been working for the outfit that took a liking to him, so they just kind of took him under their wing and really taught him a lot of what he learned.

Can you describe some of the things that he had to do, that he had to learn? because a lot of people who are going to read this don't know a thing about it. Was it sheep ranching at that time?

Well, it was farming and sheep ranching. Of course, he had a background—his people were all farmers in Indiana, so he did have a good basic knowledge of farming, and he was a good farmer. But like learning the different ranges and the different seasons, where the sheep were to go, and *mainly* just learning to handle men, getting them so that they respected him to answer the questions he asked.

Now, who were these men? Were they the shepherders?

Yes, they were the old Basque people, mainly. And there were several Italians, and there were a few Americans in the mix too.

Now at that period of time, where had your father gotten these shepherders to work the sheep ranch for him?

Well in the old days, that was the thing about this country—your people from Spain and the Basque provinces and Portugal and different countries—they all came over here for that opportunity. You know in those days, they were only paying, say, forty to fifty dollars a month, but that was big money in those days. So they migrated over here mainly as shepherders. And, of course, a lot of them ended up being ranchers and cattle people. An awful lot of the Basque people that came over would start out working for an outfit, and save their money, and end up owning their own outfits—that's just how frugal they were.

Now, did your father or your grandfather send any advertising to the Basque country, or information there that he needed shepherders?

I don't think in those days you had to—it was word of mouth. They were all so willing to come. And everybody—they all had a relative or friend in this country that knew somebody that wanted to come.

The reason I ask that, someone that I interviewed said that the Jenkins Company paid his way over.

Oh yes, most of the time they would do that, yes.

Alright. So if they did that, there was some connection before these Basque people were here.

Oh yes. They usually had a connection—they'd have an uncle or a brother or somebody that was already working here. In fact, that's the way *all* the sheep outfits—and there were many of them in the area, in the state, in those days—that's the way they brought them over.

So, like would your father or grandfather—one of his Basque workers might say, "I have a nephew who wants to come"?

Correct.

And then your company would say, "Well, I'll pay his way to bring him"?

That's right, that's the way they did that.

When your father started as a brand new person in this business—how many people would he be supervising by that time?

Well, you always had a sheep foreman who was actually out there all the time with them, but at one time they ran around forty thousand sheep, so they probably had about twenty to twenty-two of these employees just with the sheep. Then, of course, on the ranches you had two or three people on each one of them. So at times you had a payroll of from forty to fifty people.

And your mother took care of that part of it?

Yes, she was the office. And she was actually the business manager. She learned to buy and sell the lambs and the wool and the cattle and so forth.

Had she had some experience before she married?

No, none, that was it. It was all intuition.

Now, by the time your mother and father took it over, many years had elapsed. Do you know anything about the development of that company before that time? Because now you're talking about a pretty large enterprise. Did they talk to you at all about how your grandfather developed into such a large sheepherding and ranching operation?

The real development came *after* my grandfather and grandmother both passed away.

Oh, I see!

Rees Jenkins, who was a cousin of my grandmother's, she sent for him when my grandfather passed away.

Sent from...

Over in Wales.

And what was his name?

Rees T. Jenkins.

The same as the Reese River?

Yeah.

Is that a coincidence?

No, I don't think so.

Did they name the river after him?

No, I think that was named after somebody else.

But it was the same spelling?

No, he didn't have the "E" on the end of his name.

So they sent for him?

My Grandmother Jenkins sent for him to come over and help her. And then of course when he broke off from the outfit and decided he wanted to get something of his own going, about that time my grandmother passed away, and that's when my mother and dad came back.

And what year was that?

That was in 1918. But Rees Jenkins actually was the one that went out and was able to acquire ranches and patent land, you know, and one thing and another for the company, so that they could develop.

Was Rees experienced in this in Wales?

Yes, he evidently had had small flocks of sheep over there.

But he had a good business head too, obviously.

Very, very, very good.

Did you know him?

Oh yes. In fact, quite a man. He was about five-foot-five and about five feet around. He was one of those. And after he left here, he went to Susanville, California, and developed his *own* outfit, which was as large as this one.

What year was that?

That was in, I would imagine, about 1914 or 1915.

So he didn't stay here very long.

Well, he was here for a few years.

Do you have any pictures of Rees?

Well, I don't know if we do or not.

Let's start with when he came. What part of this enterprise, then—you said he started to buy things—can you give me in more detail what areas?

I think they bought what we call the Rock Creek Ranch and the Blossom Ranch, and I believe the Martin and Home ranches were acquired under his stewardship.

Now, was it that he was sharp enough to see land that was available and advised them to buy it? Is that how it worked?

Well, yeah, this is what happened, you know. And in those days you had a lot of people who started these ranches, and then after a few years they could see that if the right party came along and could buy them out, why, they would sell. Most of these ranches were all started by other old-timers, and they could see the handwriting on the wall, and thought they ought to get out. So the bigger outfits just started acquiring them.

Now, was this mainly sheep?

Well, it was mainly sheep for the first probably ten years of the existence. Then after that, they started branching out into cattle too.

Was that while Rees was still here?

Yes, while he was still here they started going into the cattle business.

So by the time your parents came, had Rees gone on his own?

Yes, he'd gone on his own.

So that's why they needed them.

Yeah.

So then, move it along for me, for people to understand how this remarkable company continued to grow. What was the kind of progress that developed when your mom and dad now were here running it?

Well, the big thing that made these outfits go was just good help—good, honest help. And you could see a little reason to go out maybe and buy up something else, or increase your holdings in some manner, you know, buying another ranch, and it just kept getting bigger and bigger.

Who were the influential ones after Rees who saw this?

Well, it was Dad and Mother.

Would you say it was not an understanding of the market for the sheep and the cattle? Was that part of it? Was there a good market?

Well, also that, and range. You still had to make sure you had enough range, because you know, you had—particularly with the sheep people—there was always that little animosity among them and the cattle people.

Yeah, I hear about that.

So the sheep people just had to go out and buy up what they could too, so that the cattle people just couldn't keep them off of it. And

vice versa, the cattle people are going out and buying ranges too, so the sheepmen couldn't go on it. So it was a vicious cycle, is what it was.

Now, just so I understand this, when you said they bought it—was there open range that was government lands where all animals could go?

Well, yeah, at that time, the railroad—as you know, they owned twenty miles each side of the railroad, which was government grants—and at that time, you could acquire, buy from the railroad.

Oh, you could buy the land.

Yeah, you *could* buy. Now that policy has now been stopped.

Was it called W.T. Jenkins Company?

W.T. Jenkins Company, uh-huh.

So then did they buy...

They would buy, yes, as well as other outfits doing the same thing. But you'd buy in the proximity of your own operation.

And then would they fence that around?

Well, not ordinarily. Fences didn't really come into being too much until in the 1940s.

Well, if you didn't fence, how could animals respect the line?

Well, you just ran in common. See, your sheep all had tenders with them, you know, sheepherders.

Okay, so they didn't roam free.

No, so you had certain lines. The cattle were a different stow: they could more or less roam wherever the water and grass were.

So did the cattle and the sheep have different ranges?

In *some* areas, like in your winter ranges, they were pretty much separated by the types of feed that there were. But then when you went up onto the summer ranges, they pretty much intermingled.

Where were the summer ranges, and where were the winter ranges?

Well the winter ranges were mainly south of Battle Mountain. In fact, our sheep used to go as far south as Gabs in the Gabs area. And in the summer, we would end up right on the Idaho and Nevada line up around Gold Creek and Mountain City, and the Owyhee Indian Reservation, up in there.

But they didn't go on the Indian reservation?

No.

So how long would these sheepherders be out with the sheep?

Well you'd try to get them into town at least every three or four months, if you could.

That long?

Yeah, they'd be out that long. And the thing with those fellows, they were over here to make money. And they didn't care about coming to town. Even though they were only making—at the time we sold the business, I think the top wage was around three hundred

dollars—but to them that was still pretty good money.

They had no other expenses.

Well, they got their room and board. And of course their “room” was a tent on a burro’s back, you know! But they were here for a purpose.

How many shepherders would there be? Would they be alone? or would there be a couple of them?

Well, what you did in the winter, you had a camp tender who moved the camp and did the cooking, and then you had two herds of sheep assigned to each camp. So there were actually three people together.

Okay, so they weren’t entirely alone.

Yeah. And then the foreman, or one of the bosses, every ten days would go out and count the sheep and take new provisions and one thing and another to them. I know when I took it over, I always tried to stay at least one night in each camp so that we had somebody to visit with and give them all the gossip and everything that was going on!

What did they do for a little bit of recreation?

Well, really, you know, it was kind of a daylight-to-dark business. But in later years, they all had portable radios.

With batteries?

Batteries, yeah. But they were all the old-country people. They all had a lot of stories to tell. They might tell the same story over and

over at night...And they talked about home and about family.

Did they sing?

Oh, they did some singing, yes. But it was mainly just visiting, you know.

Was it because they had the temperament to tolerate that isolation that they were the important shepherders?

Well, I think a lot of it was that, but also a lot of it, there was this one idea in their mind: they *all* had the idea to come over here and make a stake and go back home.

Oh, did they all think they were going home?

Yeah, and many of them *did* but many of them *stayed*. And then a lot of them that *did* go back—particularly in the later years—they could just see the change—they’d end up coming back. Because “the old country,” as they called it, just wasn’t what it *was*. You know, you stop and think, some of these fellows came here when they were fifteen, sixteen years old, as babies, more or less.

Oh, real young.

Yeah, they’d get up, say, forty or fifty [years old]—and a lot of them would acquire quite a little stake—and they’d think, “Okay”—thinking of the old country in those days—Okay, I’ve got fifteen thousand, twenty thousand dollars now, I can go back and make it.” They soon found out that even over there, it wasn’t quite enough.

Let’s go back to your mom and dad running it, and kind of bring me through the steady growth.

Well, it was pretty much status quo until 1945. They had, well, it was the W.T. Jenkins Company, which was ranching, and about twenty thousand sheep and about three thousand cattle. Then in 1945, after my two brothers and I both came home from the Service, we acquired the "25 Land and Cattle Company," which was a big cattle operation just ten miles west of town here, on the river, which had lands intermingled with the W.T. Jenkins Company, so it was just a natural.

You were able to buy it?

When it came up for sale, we were able to buy it. So that way we were able to increase our cattle herd to about ten thousand head. So at that time, the sheepherder problem was starting to be a real big one because they just weren't coming over, as many of them, to herd sheep. And there was starting to be problems with the range, the Grazing Service and the Forest Service were starting to cut back the numbers on these different allotments. And so we increased the cattle and started cutting back on the sheep some. So at the time we sold out in 1964, we were running, oh, approximately ten thousand cattle and about eight thousand sheep.

I want to go all the way back, now, because we've got to get you born and onto the ranch. What I want to know, first, are your very earliest recollections. How many children were born into the family?

There were three of us brothers.

Bet they were happy to have the boys to work on the ranch.

Uh-huh.

Where are you in the line-up of the three?

I'm the oldest.

You're the oldest, so you had a lot of responsibility?

Well, you know, the nice thing about our family, it was big enough so you could all have your own divisions to run: like I was mainly with the sheep end of it as we got older, and took care of all the haying jobs in the summertime, putting the hay up. And then my two brothers: Tom was the cattle superintendent; and then John helped Tom with the cattle, and then he also worked in the office with my mother.

We're going to bring you way back to when you were a little guy, if that's okay.

Uh-huh.

And your first memories as a young boy, what your life was like—because I'm sure they started you very early into some of the ranching. Tell me, when you were a little boy, what your life was like.

Well, the thing is, we had a good life. We probably, the first few years, had kind of a sheltered life.

Where did you live?

Right here in Battle Mountain, on the north side of town, a big white house there which was the family home, built in 1918. And we were all raised there.

Did they take you out on the ranch when you were real, real young?

We spent a lot of time on the ranches. In fact, in the summer, after we were, oh, I'd say after age six or seven, we spent most of our time out on the ranches. We had an awful lot of real good, old-time respectable families who were on the ranches, and the folks would just take us in like we were their own children, and we did what their kids did.

Give me some examples.

Well, for example, the Joe Ancho family which was on what we called the Martin Ranch there, up at the Rock Creek Ranch first north of town, and we would go up there, they had children. So we just were part of them. Then we had another family on what we called our Jack Creek Ranch which was about sixty miles north of Elko, by the name of Urriole who had two boys. So we were just all together.

When you were beginning to learn about the ranching, would it be your father, or some of these others like these other families—what did you first start doing when you were on the ranch to help, to learn?

Well, when we were little, the main thing we did was ride horses, you know, and of course go round and *thought* we were helping with the cattle. But then as we got older—particularly in my case—we started to work in the hay fields in the summertime.

Tell me what you would be doing.

Well, that could be cutting hay and stacking it.

How old were you?

Oh, let's see, I think the first time I was in the seventh grade. What would I have been? About...twelve or thirteen.

Would your brothers be with you?

Well, no, both my brothers were more inclined toward strictly the horse end, and so they'd end up with some of the cowboys. And I did that later on too, but I started out mainly working in the hay field.

Did you like that?

Oh yeah.

How many would be working in the field you'd be with?

Oh, some of the crews would be as much as twenty men. Of course, the thing about our outfit, the great thing, we hired lots of kids. The minute school was out in summer, half the kids in town would be right there to go to work for us.

Yeah, I read where 85 percent of the high school kids worked for the Jenkins Company at some point.

That's right! In fact, Richard Sumin, who ended up being a vice president of the Battle Mountain Gold Company, the first job he ever had was working for me in the hayfield.

Is that right?! Oh my! Now, when you worked in the hay fields, did you live somewhere out on the ranch?

Oh yeah, lived in bunkhouses on the ranch. You had cook shacks on every ranch, and you got three good meals a day. Then you

had these big bunk houses where you slept. Of course in those days there weren't too many shower facilities or anything, so you had to go to the creek or the river.

So the other ones you were working with, some were not too much older than you.

Oh, no, in fact, there'd be a lot of kids. In fact, there would be four or five that were kind of buddies, and you all ended up pretty much the same place.

Did your parents pay you?

Oh yes, we got paid whatever the wage was. I know every year Dad would try to Jew us down, but that was one thing about Mother, she'd say, "No, they worked like the men did, so they get paid too." And that was a dollar a day!

How long did you do that, the haying?

Well, I did it all through high school: I'd say probably from the seventh grade through high school. Of course, then you also went on to other things as you got a little older. You know, when other little jobs came up, you went and did that, and you did quite a lot of cowboying. If they needed help in the sheep camps, you'd go help there for a few days too, on weekends, and in the summer, of course.

Now, would you do the weekends while you were going to school?

Oh yes!

Just constant?

Yeah.

Let me bring you back a little bit, because I want to know a little bit about not just the ranching. Tell me about your early school days when you were going through elementary school—and I understand that's through eighth grade?

Uh-huh, it was then, yeah.

And as you were going through elementary school, were you developing special interests in your classes?

Well, I think the thing that happened to so many kids in those days, if you had family that had a business, that's all you were thinking about. You were thinking, "Okay, they're ranchers, I'm going to be a rancher." Or "I'm a miner, my son's going to be a miner." And that's pretty much the way it was. And then of course in later years, like my youngest brother John, by the time he finished his military service, he went to the University of Nevada-Reno. I believe his degree was in political science. He's now our Assemblyman representing this District in the Nevada Legislature.

Was he not as interested in ranching?

Oh yes! And a good one, and a good cowboy and a good horseman!

So this was just another area?

Yeah, just another area

Let's bring you back to school: In your high school years, did you have favorite subjects?

Well, I always liked to read, so history was always my big thing. Math always threw me, but history and English and those types—all the social studies and that—they were always my field.

So was your life kind of busy going to school and working on the ranch?

No, it really wasn't that much, because you know, there weren't the things to do that there are today. It seems like the minute school is out now, there's a ball game to go to, or this or that or the other thing. But in those days, like in high school, the only sport we had was basketball. Well, that lasted, what, three or four months, and that was it. But the thing is, the kids in Battle Mountain all—or most of them—either had horses or something, and they were all more or less [similarly] inclined. So you'd ride horses at night, or do this type of thing.

Did you go fishing a lot?

Well, no, the funny thing, my family, except our father, were not fishermen or hunters.

So you didn't get into those?

No, I never got into that, no.

So when you finished high school, did you go full time into your ranching?

Well, I worked one year and then I went to the University of California at Davis, and I was there a year. And then about that time we could see the war coming on, so...

Let's get you back to Davis: Is that because it was...

Agricultural college. See, getting back to that same old theme, see: ranching, ranching, ranching.

That was smart. So how long were you there?

I was there just a year.

And what was that year of study?

That year was mainly in ag [agricultural] economics.

Did you find that useful?

Well, I really just had a smattering of it. But in those days, mainly common sense is what did it.

Especially your growing up right there.

Correct.

Did your interest in the ranch still stay with haying? or did you develop other areas?

Oh, no, I ended up running the sheep end. Then I also got involved a little bit in the politics of the county and one thing and another.

Well, we're not going to move that fast. We're going to bring you back now...

But it was mainly ranching, yeah.

So you went one year, and then the war came?

Well, yeah, and I was home about a year, year-and-a-half, and then I ended up in the military until 1945.

Without going into detail, briefly give me a little rundown on where you were and then what happened to you.

Well, I was in France in the invasion of Normandy.

Which branch of the military?

In the Army.

Did you enlist, or were you drafted?

I was drafted.

And did they draft people from ranches?

Well, the thing was, there were three of us. And somebody had to go, and being as I was the oldest, I just felt that I should be the one. I mean, it wasn't right for all of them to stay home, so I went. And the ironic part of that—this is getting ahead a little bit—but the day that I was discharged, my two brothers enlisted! So at least there was one of us home. So we all had service,

So going briefly through the military, tell me what happened to you.

Well, I was wounded in St. Malo, France, on August 11, 1944.

How were you wounded?

A head injury—shrapnel in the back of my head.

Oh my!

And I lost the vision in my left eye. That's probably the worst thing that happened to me. But then of course then I ended up spending about all of one-year-and-a-half, nearly, in the hospital.

It was a real bad injury?

Well, it was the type that they had to watch.

Where was the hospital? Where were you staying?

I was stationed, when I came back to this country, after we left England—I don't know the name of the hospital in England—I ended up at Dewitt General Hospital down at Auburn, California. In fact, that was the year that my wife and I were married. Then she went back and lived with me down there until I was discharged.

Now, let's back up. Did you know your wife here in Battle Mountain?

Oh, we grew up together!

And when did you start getting serious? Before the war or after?

Well, we went together off an on all through high school. And then at the time I went in the military, we were going together then.

And then she came to Auburn?

Yes.

Where were you married?

We were married here in Battle Mountain at the St. John Bosco Church.

Were you well enough to be able to do that?

Oh yeah. I was in pretty good shape, because, see, that was from August to December.

And how long did you both stay in Auburn?

We were down there until March, when I was discharged in 1945.

And then you came back home?

Came back here, yeah.

And were you well enough to get back into the ranching?

Well, it was slow. I had to work in the office a while, then a lot of light duty things. Within a year I was back doing my thing.

So then tell me about “doing my thing.” What did you start to do when you came back here?

Well, mainly helping to run the sheep operation and the ranching operation. That was one thing I still couldn't do—and to this day I can't—is ride horseback too much, because it affects my injury. So I have to be careful on that.

Describe a real typical day when you were doing what you're telling me, because I want to get a visual picture of what you did.

Well, the main thing is, our headquarters were always here in Battle Mountain. And I tried to be home as much as I could, but you'd end up taking groceries out and counting the sheep and seeing the condition of the range, and the condition of the sheep.

How did you travel?

By pickup—just regular pickups—until the four-wheel-drives became the “in” thing, and then we all went to them. And then during the lambing season, when the ewes

were having their lambs, you spent an awful lot of time out there in the camps.

When is that season?

That's in April through May. And then about the middle of June the sheep would go up to what we called the Forest Reserve for summer, and that was when the lambs would grow and get fat.

How did you take them up there?

They would trail, walk.

They'd walk, and would you follow with your pickup?

Well, no, you had these certain places you met them, but the herders were always with them.

Did the herders walk with them?

Well, some had horses, but most of them preferred to walk.

How many miles did they have to go, and how long did it take?

Well, it just depended. Like with the ewes and lambs, you'd try to go not over three or four miles a day, if you could help it. Of course there were some days it was a long distance between water, you'd have to go a little more.

How many miles did they have to go?

Well, they had to go from the spring range, it was probably forty miles to the last

summer camp. But they'd work their way up slow through the summer.

And camp in tents?

Yeah.

How many men would there be?

Well, there'd be—in the summertime, each herder was responsible for about a thousand sheep and their lands.

Oh my!

And then of course you had a camp tender that was moving the camps for each two herds of sheep.

Would that many sheep know where to stop or when to stop?

Well, you control them with your dogs and that. You can circle them, you know, and bring them back to what they call "the bed ground."

When the lambs were born, about how many to a sheep?

Well, usually singles, but a lot of your older ewes would have twins. And once in a while, triplets, but that was rather rare.

And was this once a year?

Once a year, uh-huh.

In the sheep business, is it mainly the wool that brings in the income?

That's the nice thing about the sheep business, it's both the wool and the lambs.

Maybe this year the wool might be the good seller, and then next time it might be the lambs. Or sometimes both, or sometimes both not so good.

You didn't raise them for the meat?

Well, yeah, the lambs would be sold.

Oh, the lambs, I see.

Yeah, see, they'd go to the feed lots and to the packing houses.

How was business doing when you first came back?

Well, you had your ups and downs. The agricultural business is a *very*—it runs in cycles. And it's a funny thing to figure out, but we've always said that if you could be in the livestock business, you had to be nuts anyway!

[laughs] Is the water one of the things?

Well, yeah.

So then how did your work in the business develop from after the war? Bring me slowly through that.

Well, after the war, why that's when we acquired the "25 Land and Cattle Company," which was west of town here, and that's when we were able to enlarge the cattle operation and start cutting back some on the sheep.

Why did you do that?

Well, mainly because of the ranges and labor was starting to be a problem.

You needed more labor with the sheep than with the cattle?

Yeah. Well, the thing was, it was harder and harder to get herders to come over from the old country to herd the sheep.

Cattle doesn't need as much?

Well, the thing is, there's always people that want to be cowboys, and there's a lot of them.

When they're working with the cattle, is it because they don't have to stay out?

Well, they stay out too. But, you know, cowboying is a little different life. It's a hard life too, but it's not the lonely life that being a sheepherder is. And then there's so many people have that stigma against sheep.

Why?

Don't ask me! That just goes back through history! [laughs] That just goes back through history.

Is it true, I heard, that because the sheep eat the grass all the way down to the root and there's no more left for the cattle? Is that true?

Well, that's one of the fallacies, but they don't really eat a lot of the same feed. Your sheep are more of a browse-type animal—flowers and things like that—than they are the grasses. Of course, sure, in the fall and the spring of the year, the fine grasses they'll crop that pretty short alright. But we ran sheep and cattle in a lot of the same areas, and unless you had a real dry year or something, you didn't really see too much of the effect. But cattle also can abuse the range, you know, if they want to go into that. Management is the big thing.

Did your cattle and sheep graze on different ranges?

Well, some of it was common range. And then, of course, in the summer when the sheep went onto the forest lands, then the cattle stayed back on other lands *below* the forest.

Now you said it wasn't so lonely for the cowboys. What was the difference between the cowboys and the sheepherders?

Well, you know, you had as many—on a buckaroo wagon—you had as many as eight to ten men, you know, cowboys on the wagon. They had a cook, and it's not quite as lonely a life. It's a hard life, but it's just not quite as lonely. Well, you take in the summer, for example, your sheepherders, they *are*, they're pretty isolated up there on the mountain. They see their camp tender maybe every four or five days, but outside of that, they're up there with the sheep.

Is it because the sheep always have to have someone with them? and cattle don't?

Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah, the cattle are free-rangers.

I understand now. So then now you have all this additional property. So tell me now how the company changed.

Well, it just got bigger. And as it got bigger, you know, your problems got more, your Bureau of Land Management started wanting to cut back the numbers you could run, and the Forest Service the same way. That's when your conservationists and ecology started to come into the picture. For example, like the coyotes with the sheep were always a big thing, killing. For years we were able to

use different types of poison to control the coyotes. Well, pretty quick they decided that wasn't any good, so we weren't able to use it anymore, and the coyotes got to be quite a big problem as far as losses in the sheep. That's why a lot of them really quit. It isn't the reason *we* did but our reason for quitting was, we were getting, each family, the three brothers were getting such *large* families, and Mother and Dad were getting older, you know, and they were wanting out. So we just felt, "Well, okay, we've got people who might want to buy us out. We'd better sell it, and then everybody go their own way," which we did.

Let's back up some more. Did the wild horses hurt your animals too?

Well, the wild horses were a factor. But of course the wild horses now are *more* of a factor because of the way they're protected. You know, in those days, two or three times a year you'd have a big roundup and you'd bring the contractors in mainly, and they'd gather them and ship them off, I guess, to the dog food factories. I'm not exactly sure where a lot of them went. We probably ate some of them, who knows? But they *were* a problem.

What were they doing? Eating the feed?

Well, yeah, they would eat. And the thing is, well, they would just take over to the place where you just weren't, in some areas, able to operate. And that's the problem today.

How did that happen that there were so many wild horses?

Well, you know, they talk about the mustang being from the old Spanish horses,

but the big end of your wild horses ended up being horses a lot of your ranchers and that just turned out and never gathered. Everybody raised horses in those days. They turned them out in the spring of the year, and maybe you gathered them all and maybe you didn't. Then you had horses that had maybe served their usefulness, you just kind of turned them loose to make their own way, which was good, and they always made it, but an awful lot of your horses were just...Now there is, there are some horses that have the strains of the old so-called mustang, but a lot of them are just from the domesticated horse.

So what were some of the other things happening with your company before you sold it? That's quite a few years there, aren't there, from the time you came back?

Well really, not too much. It just got, like I say, to the place where families were getting bigger, and we ended up like we had five of the older boys were just about ready to want to take over responsibilities, and we could all see that maybe the outfit, as big as it was, just wasn't quite big enough.

Couldn't support all of these children?

Yeah, couldn't support all of us, you know.

Now, tell me, let's go down the line of the three boys in the family: How many children did each of you have?

Well, I have the two: Marsha and Rick, my son. My brother Tom has seven children. He has four boys and three girls, I think it is. And then John has a son and two daughters. And then the girls were getting...

And there were sons-in-law.

Well, it didn't happen, but it *could* have happened. We could just see, because we've seen it happen before.

Let's go back to your mom and dad. Tell me a little bit about before you all got older, their role your mom was doing the bookkeeping, and what about your dad?

Well, Dad was out in the outfit. Mother was not in the bookkeeping, but she was more or less selling the livestock and purchasing the supplies and things like that. And Dad, he ran the field end of it, you know. But they worked in harmony pretty well. But the thing was, they had good people. They had what they called "sheep foremen in those days, which were really dedicated people. And each ranch had a foreman: I mentioned Joe Ancho before. Well, he was one of their really top foremen. They could always trust those kind of people to take care of it like they owned it.

Now, was that George Ancho's father?

Joe Ancho Senior. That would be Francis Williams' [and George Ancho's] father.

So when did your mother and father find that they couldn't do much more work on the ranches?

Well, they were active up until the time we sold out—*real* active. Dad was still out everyday and Mother was still in the office. Of course my brother had taken over an awful lot of that for her too. But they were very, very active. It was just time in life that they had a little time to themselves.

How did they feel about the selling of the ranch?

Well, it was heartbreaking for all of us. I mean, I remember our attorney, Jack Powell,

he made half-a-dozen trips to each family to make sure that we weren't changing our minds.

Did you all have a conference?

Oh yes.

Your mom and dad...

Oh yeah. If there had been one "no" vote, it wouldn't have happened.

So everyone agreed?

Yeah.

Was the economy changing so that you weren't making enough profit?

Well, at that time, no. At that time, it was good. But the thing that was happening then was, you had all these monied people coming up from the Midwest that made money, I guess, in grain and oil and what-not, wanting to buy these places.

Oh, okay, so the market was a good time to sell.

The market was good. Yeah, it was good! I mean, it's never been that good since, I don't think. It held for a few years, up and down, and but it was the time. And the people that bought us out, they had a family who'd bought quite a few of the ranches around the Winnemucca area, so they kind of knew what they were doing.

So it was a major company?

Oh yeah, yeah.

Did one company buy all of what you had?

Well, the money was more or less one pot, but it was divided down two different entities, two different family members of it.

And what year was that?

In 1964.

That's a long time ago!

Did your mom and dad still have active years? Or were they then in retirement?

Oh, they were active. I mean, Mother was never much of a goer—she loved to stay home and read and have people come in and visit, but Dad, he spent all his time going around checking on all the grandchildren and things like that. He was active up until the time he...

But they didn't do any more work? I mean, this was retirement years?

Oh, no. Yeah, it was retirement for them.

So then you and your brothers still had time for a big long career. Tell me—because I'm interviewing you, primarily—when you knew you were going to sell the ranch, what kind of things interested you? What were you going to do with your working years?

Well, after we sold out, I stayed for a year-and-a-half with the people that bought us out. That was one of the agreements that one of the brothers would stay, so I was elected to stay, and I stayed, more or less—"managed" it and showed their new manager around and what not. Then in the meantime, my dear wife has always had quite a head on her shoulders, being in the rental business and acquiring different properties around town. She decided

she wanted to buy the one and only clothing store in Battle Mountain, so we did.

Oh, let's back up a little bit, because she didn't tell me anything about that!

I knew she wouldn't!

Now, you said, "knowing the rental business..." So back up and tell me.

Well, her parents had had a lot of rental property here in town. She probably didn't tell you that either.

No.

In their later years, she started kind of taking care of their stuff for them.

Oh, I didn't know that.

She did their bookkeeping and banking and more or less managed [the properties] for them. And through the years, as a house would come up for sale or something in town, she would ask me what I thought about it. I'd say, "Well whatever you want." I had no interest in it.

Oh, okay, so that was her.

That was her deal, you betcha! And I give her all the credit for it! And so she started acquiring. And then when this store came up for sale, it was the Olano and Urrutia Clothing Store.

What was that?

The name was Olano and Urrutia. They were both Basque people.

A clothing store?

A clothing store, yeah.

I'll bet that was needed here.

Well, it was a good store that they had here. But Mary just had her eye on it for quite a while.

Did she run it?

Oh yes, she was the boss. She had a fellow from Winnemucca who helped her for a couple of years.

She didn't tell me anything about that!

I knew she wouldn't.

Why?

Well, she just don't brag on herself! Then the same year we sold out, she decided we needed some more rental properties.

How long did she have the store?

She had that about seven years, I think.

Oh, that's quite a long time!

Then her arthritis started getting so bad that she had to get out of it. Then we built these three apartment complexes, which was her idea.

Was that when the mining was thriving?

Well, just about the time it was starting, yes. Just about the time that—it was the Duval Corporation at that time—came in. In fact,

as we were building them, they weren't even finished and we had people moving into them that were on the construction out there at the mine.

Oh, my! So a lot of new people were coming in for the work?

Yeah. So that's kind of what we did. Then later my son and I, after he got out of college, we started that Sand Hill Feed Lot out of Winnemucca, feeding cattle.

How did you happen to get into that?

Well, there were some people that have a potato chip processing plant in Winnemucca that processes all the potatoes grown in that area, which are many, many acres of them, and they had a lot of waste product. So a couple of other people by the name of Monte Rohwer and Ralph Harding, thought it was a good idea, so they bought it. And then they were underfinanced, so they came to me and about the time my son Rick was getting out of college and he wanted to stay in livestock. He went to the University of Nevada, in agriculture there. And so I decided well, it might be a good venture, so we looked it over and we bought into it and we could see that as underfinanced as it was, we were going to have to put too much money in it, so we just bought them out and took it over ourselves.

Now, was it the waste product of the potatoes that you fed the cattle?

Yeah. It's the potato peeling and any of the reject french-fried potatoes or any of the product that they make there.

And that's good for cows?

Yeah.

Is that what you use to fatten them up?

Yeah, that's what they use to fatten them up.

Uh-huh, and it's healthy, a vegetable.

Of course we use some corn and hay too.

And then so how many cattle would come in?

Well, we can feed as high as three thousand there.

Oh, my! So it's a big property?

Well, it's small, compared to most feed lots. But it's been a nice little operation. It's had a lot of ups and downs too.

And are the cattle all local?

Well, most of them. Some come from Utah and Idaho.

Really?! Is that because they don't have [feed lots] near them?

No, these different people go out and buy them, you know, and they bring them in. We're what they call "custom feeders"—we feed for other people.

Oh, how do they bring them in? in big trucks?

Big trucks, yeah.

And how long would they leave them there to feed?

Well, any more, they're there usually a hundred and twenty days to finish out, and then they go directly to the butcher from there.

And your son manages? That's his?

It's his deal. He now owns 80 percent of it. It's really his deal.

Now, before we leave ranching, because I want to get as much information [as I can] before we move into your other areas of your life, is there anything more that would help those [interested in ranching]?

Well, I don't really know. Just one thing about ranching: it was certainly a good way of life. I don't think it's that good any more, with the way things are going with the ranges and the conservationists, and I don't mind taking a shot at them, myself. But it's still a good life, and there's still lots and lots of family-owned operations in this state, and a lot of good ones. But I think once you get farming and livestock in your blood, it's pretty hard to get out.

Tell us what other activities in your life are important to you.

Well, I'm kind of proud of a lot of the accomplishments that we made when a few years back, in 1956, I was appointed to the old Elementary School Board. That's before they went county-wide. Each town had its own school board.

So Battle Mountain had its own school board?

Battle Mountain had its own school board and Austin had its own and that was true throughout the state.

I see. So tell me about that.

We acquired the property where...It was Bruce Swackhamer and Leon Belestegui and I were the trustees. Leon is now deceased. We were criticized at the time, but we bought ten acres of land on the east end of town here for new schools that were being projected. And we thought the townspeople were going to crucify us for buying it! And already, it's too small!

It's too small! Were the townspeople angry because taxes had to be raised?

Well, yeah, they had to put on an extra five-cent levy on the tax rate to do some of these things. And the three of us, we built the Eliza Pierce Elementary School over here. And then that's about the time, about 1957 or 1958, that they started making these studies about going county-wide with the school districts. So I was on Governor Sawyer's—they called it the Peabody Commission who studied this and made the recommendations to go county-wide, which I was opposed to.

Why did they want to do that?

Well, they felt there could be more control of the monies, and that a county-wide system might bring better education—which I don't think it did.

Do you think it might have been to spread the money to the littler places like Austin or others?

Well, I think so, but I can't speak for other counties. But in *this* county, they all did fairly well with what they had. But then when we went county-wide, it got so big—you end up with a superintendent and then you end up

with this and that. I still say what's wrong with the schools is that there's too much administration and not enough down at the teaching level—in any of these districts!

Before, it was city-wide?

Yeah. Let's see, we had our own Battle Mountain Elementary District; Austin had its own; and then the high school was a county-wide school.

I see, in other words, there's no high school in Austin?

Yes, there was.

Oh, there was one?

Yes, a small one. But the high schools were county, the elementary schools were local control—that's the way it was.

Now, did the funds still come from a wider area? or just from your city?

Well, at that time it was just from your tax rates.

From your own city?

Yeah, your town and your county tax rates. Now you not only have that, but you have the state sales tax, which more or less funds them.

So what was your role then, when it changed to county?

Well, then I was elected to the new county board. And we built the high school, which is now the junior high school. That was in 1962. And 1962 was when I was elected to

the County Commission. And I served for ten years on the County Commission. And we oiled the streets in Battle Mountain and we expanded the fire department, built new sewer and water systems, bought land for a new county road shop, oiled the road to Cortez Gold, which came in about that time, as well as helped oil the road up to the Duval Mine. About that time, about 1963 and 1964 is when Duval and Cortez Gold started to really come in here. Up until that time, you know the county monies were not too good. But then with the mining, why that really brought things up, and there were a lot of things we were able to do.

When the mines come, does that bring monies through taxes? Are they taxed to help with these things that are needed because they're here?

Well, through your net proceeds of mines, which is a state-formulated [plan] to bring money back to the counties that the mines are in. Plus you have your property taxes, your equipment taxes, and think of the payrolls that come in!

Right, and what's spent in the town.

It's the money. And so many of them end up being permanent residents. We've had people—I remember when Duval first came, a lot of people came from Arizona: "Oh, we just can't stand it here, can't stand it here!" They'd end up back in Arizona...

They came back?

A lot of them came back! But it gave [the county] a lot better tax base. And then of course in that same period we built the hospital. That was one of the criteria that Duval had. In fact, they worked with us very

hard to make sure that hospital got built, because they were interested in doctors and a hospital, which is natural, because of their employees. In fact, if we hadn't been able to build that hospital and entice a couple of doctors, they just might have thought about it a little bit longer before they came.

I want a little more detail on that. What year was it, and which hospital was it that was built?

Well, I don't know what they call it now—I call it the Lander County Hospital, but it might be Battle Mountain, I don't know.

Is that the first hospital, or the second?

Well, that's actually the third hospital. There used to be one real small one years ago, and then there's a building on Third Street which I now own, which is apartments, which at one time was the hospital until the new one was built. That was built in 1964 or 1965.

Oh, quite a while ago.

Yeah.

And how did you entice doctors to come?

Well, we had a fine old doctor by the name of Hyde—he passed away here. But we were just able to go out and through letters and through administrators and one thing and another, trying to bring them in. We've gone through an awful lot of them here.

How long have the two that are here now, been here?

Let's see, Dr. Peters has been here, I'd say, for maybe a little better than a year, and this

new doctor who I've never met has just been here a few months.

That's very new: what happened to the other doctors?

Well, a lot of them, what happens in a town like Battle Mountain, a lot of times the wives don't like it. Then you get other ones that come in, they just love it. But a lot of them, it's going on to different fields. You know, you're kind of limited to your practice here, mainly because the hospital isn't big enough for surgeries and different things.

I understand that babies can't be born in the hospital.

That's right. I think it's foolish.

If you can't do surgeries, then how do you do a Cesarean if you get in trouble?

Well, that could be, but think of the hundreds of kids that were born at home without all that.

Well, so many women used to die.

That's right, I guess they did.

Are they going to upgrade the hospital so they can have surgeries and births?

Well, they're talking about it. I mean, this is not the first time this has come up.

Because this is a big enough town now.

But I don't know what their problem seems to be, whether it's politics or what it is, but I think maybe this time they might be on the right track. All I know is what I follow in

the papers. When I got out of it in 1972, I just made up my mind I wasn't going to interfere with anybody.

Are they talking about it?

Yeah, they're talking about it.

I think that people might not want to stay—especially a doctor's wife—who knows the dangers.

That's right.

Did any of the younger people ever say, "Well I'm going to become a doctor and come back and help my community"?

Well, I don't know if that's true or not. I can only think of a couple of boys from here that have gone on to be doctors, and neither one of them have ever come back.

Is it because...

Well, I just don't think they want to come back to Battle Mountain.

And is it because it would limit the kind of career [they could have], unless the hospital improves?

Well, I don't know that that's entered into it or not, to be honest with you. I know even like in Winnemucca, as good a hospital as they have—and they do have a lot of doctors there now—they've sent several boys, they financed them, the county has, through the college...

They don't come back.

They never come back.

That's a shame.

It's a shame. I mean, there should be something...

Something to contribute to your community.

But, if you *force* them to come back, what kind of a job are they going to do if you do that? So you're better off without them.

I know. Because it's getting to be a bigger town. And you have a lot of fine schools.

Oh yeah, I think we have good schools here, I really do.

Now, before we move from the school and hospital boards, anything more to tell me on those?

I don't really think so.

So tell me now more about your role on the County Commission. How many years did you serve?

I served ten years, 1962 to 1972. I was elected right after the flood we had here. And at the time, they had the controversial street program.

What's that?

Oiling the streets. They had a Board of Commissioners who decided they were going to oil the streets, and they just more or less rammed it down the people's throats. They were going to do it by taxing a special assessment to everybody. So a lot of people voted for me, hoping that I'd stop it. And I did have some thoughts about it until I got in and saw the monies that had already been spent,

and that the paving of that was going to be the smaller end of it, so I more or less went along with them, and it's turned out to be a good thing. But for a while, I had some people—particularly some of the old-timers—that were a little disgruntled to think that I'd let them down. It's pretty hard to explain to them that you *hadn't*.

I was going to say, I think we all learn that we try to make decisions without really seeing everything that's before the ones that make the decisions.

That's right.

Were you ever Chairman of the Board?

Twice.

Now, when you were County Commissioner, the county seat was in Austin. Did you have to travel to Austin?

Yeah, twice a month.

Tell me about it.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, the county seat should *still* be in Austin. I'm just one of those old-timers that felt that it belonged there, and the old saying used to be, "Well, if Austin doesn't have that, what else has it got?" And to be quite honest with you, it was a good place to have the county seat, because you could always say, "Well, if you've got a problem like that, we meet twice a month in Austin: you come up to the meeting and discuss it"—rather than being able to run over here every time they meet with their little tiny problems. I'll get shot for saying this, but that's alright.

That's alright. No, we have to learn.

But I didn't see anything really that wrong with it. It gave you a chance to see that end of the county then.

Did people have to stay overnight there?

No. Sometimes you got home a little late. In the old days, years and years ago, when the highways were bad, they *did* stay overnight. But we'd leave here at seven o'clock in the morning. It was very seldom that we were any later than seven o'clock at night getting home. Most of the time we were home at five-thirty or six o'clock, you know.

How often would most people who have to deal with the county courthouse—all the things there—how often might they have to travel to Austin?

Well, that was the only thing, forgetting the county commissioner end of it. It did make somewhat of a burden for people with recording papers, you know.

And what about if you're on jury duty?

Well, jury duty, of course you had to go up there—that's where the jury was. But there was very seldom, to my knowledge, any trials where people had to really stay overnight. I mean, the judge would always dismiss them early enough to get home, and they paid them for their travel time. So they really weren't out...

Or if they had to stay overnight, they paid for their hotel?

Yeah, sure. So they weren't really out anything, except the inconvenience of the trip back and forth. Well, I know progress means change. But, you know, in your heart, you

still wish it had stayed [laughs] where it was! Because, see, they had a branch office for the assessor here, and a substation for the sheriff, and those things. So most of the functions went on, except the county commission meetings. But the funny thing, we always found that all these problems that people had, when you told them, "Well, we meet twice a month in Austin," all of a sudden some of those problems weren't there any more. And if somebody did show up, you knew they were concerned, so you listened to them.

Now I know that the county commissioners' meetings, how long they are, because I give reports, and the agenda is very long, with very important things, like the jail, and the welfare. I mean, there are many people, and I stay at the Holiday Inn Express, and I see all these people staying overnight, because there's such a long, long, long agenda. So that's when I think about the county commissioner now...I mean, just from what I see. I mean, if I'm on the agenda, I sometimes wait three hours. My office is there, and I can work there. And they all seem like important things on the agenda. Is it busier now?

Oh, yes, it's much busier. Of course, I think, personally, I just don't think there's enough management of the meetings. I think they get into too many personal squabbles, and they let their district attorney dictate to them. I don't care if he knows that, because I think that he has just really gone overboard in trying to dictate to the county what they can and can't do.

Is it just traditional that it's only twice a month? Or do you think it could be every week so that different people get on each week?

I know when I was a commissioner, the law pretty much stated how you met. It was

once a month, and then any other meeting you had, for many years, was just an informative meeting. And they did change that to where you could meet twice a month. But of course, you take like in Reno, for example, they might meet twice a month, but they might meet for a week at a time, too.

I see. Yes, because it's getting so busy.

And I think here they're going to have to do something, they're going to have to either find somebody to screen a lot of these things that come before them, have some kind of an executive assistant who can handle it. And of course what you're talking about there, you're talking about, say a county manager type thing, which I know they're looking into. I think if they could find the right one, it might be a good thing, to take care of a lot of this stuff. For example, when I was there, like you had a road and bridge foreman on each end of the county: anything concerning the roads was their baby. But if it got to be a problem, I was the road commissioner. If it was on the Austin end, I'd take the foreman from here with me, we'd go meet with him, and we'd go out and meet with the rancher or the miner and we'd solve it. But I had the time to do it, too. I could *take* the time to do it. But today, it's a different ball game.

And it's much bigger.

Oh, it's a different ball game.

It's a much bigger population here. You've got, what, doubled since then?

Oh, more than that. I would say this population has probably tripled.

What were some of the most satisfying things for you when you were on the Board of Commissioners?

Well, the satisfying things were enticing Duval to come in like they did, along with Commissioner Fisher.

So you were on it when they came.

Oh yeah, you bet! And then bringing Cortez Gold Mine over here.

What were some of the enticements, besides getting a hospital?

Well, just making sure we worked a lot with the schools, and we made sure that the Gold Creek subdivision over here on the east end of town was more or less built for Duval employees and one thing and another. And we were able to grant them a few easements as far as sewer and water and things to make it a little easier. And we allowed a big trailer park to go in on the west end of town so they could have a place for their employees and one thing and another. You know, a lot of things like that.

Yes, because that brought a lot of employment.

They would have come anyway, because the product was there. But it made them *feel* better to have some kind of a welcome mat, you know, to come in on.

When a big company like that comes into Battle Mountain, how many of their own people who run it and manage it—let's take Duval, let's use that one—came and moved into Battle Mountain? Not just the miners who were temporary, but the ones who stayed.

Well, they brought their managers and their mill managers and all that type of thing with them from other properties. And in fact, Ted Watson, who I think just retired, came with them when they came here. He was a mill superintendent. He has a home here.

He stayed?

Oh, he stayed, yeah.

How many years—let's take the Duval—did these people live here? What was the time period of the Duval Mine?

Well, it's still operating. It's operating now under Battle Mountain Gold.

Oh, okay, same company.

You see, Pennzoil acquired Duval and then they had a bunch of spin-offs. Then that formed Battle Mountain Gold, and that is what *was* the Duval Mine.

So did they replace, or did they keep some of the same people?

Just the same operation under a different name, was all it was. And many, many of them now are retiring, and they are local. They're here. They are phasing-down that operation, and they're retiring a lot of people, but most of them, they own their homes here, and I see a lot of them and they say, "What are we going to do? We've got our home here, we might as well stay here. We've been here for twenty years."

Sure, they got their house when it was reasonable.

Sure, so this is home, so they're here. So it's been good for the town in a lot of ways, you know.

And that's part of that growth in the population.

That's right, that's where it comes from.

And what about the miners? Did some of the same people stay working in the mines?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, a lot of people have retired right here. Of course, a lot have transferred out, too, you know, been offered jobs other places, quit the company and gone. And Cortez Gold over here in Crescent Valley is the same way. Well, I don't know how many, but *several* that are permanent Battle Mountain residents now.

Do you see the mining continuing in this region?

Well, I think it can really continue, unless the present administration does something to their royalty taxes and that to make their all just throw up their hands and go overseas to where they have better tax breaks. It doesn't look good right now.

You mean to do mining overseas?

Oh yeah! Well, use Battle Mountain Gold: they've got two or three operations in Australia and I believe it's in Africa someplace, that are bigger than anything they have here. Most of these mines *do*. And if they, let's say, put an 8- or a 10- or a 12 percent royalty on all these ores as they're mined—not on the refined product in particular—these people are just going to quit. They're going to say, "Why should we mine here when we can go to these other countries and..."

When they come here, do they lease the mining and get the mineral rights? Or what's the process?

Well, it works both ways. Usually they end up buying out all the people that might own the claims around them. But then there are some areas where they will just mine it and pay a royalty or percentage each month to whoever the owner is.

But when they buy out the claims, then that's theirs, is that right?

That's theirs, yeah.

When they go overseas, what's the system when you mine overseas?

I really don't have any idea. I think it's pretty much a fifty-fifty thing with the governments. But they have so many incentives, like cheaper labor and so forth. I imagine the tax breaks are a lot better. I don't know this for sure, not being a mining man. But there must be some reason why there are some of them going over, and others *threatening* to go. I just wish I knew more about mining, but I don't.

I'm kind of entranced with what I read about your mother, and I don't know anything about your father. Let's start with your father. I want to know a little bit about him as a person and a father and a husband. Tell me about him.

Well, Dad was a compassionate man, but he was also at times a little bit harsh. He had a hard raising. He grew up in Indiana where... He couldn't stand waste. For example, like at home, if you'd leave something on your plate, he just couldn't stand it, because from his own life—he worked his way through Wabash College in Indiana as a waiter in a

fraternity house. He used to tell the story many, many times the cook would come out and tell everybody to leave something on your plate, because that's what the help has to eat. It was probably a story, but he was just trying to make a point about being wasteful. In his early years, he was really a frugal man. Of course in later years, he got to where he really enjoyed life.

He was very poor? Was it a poor home?

Yeah, poor farm families back in those days. It was just good, hard-working, honorable people. See, his own mother died when he was, oh, I think nine or ten years old. And his father, I guess, was a harsh man. And then when he remarried, I guess [my father's] stepmother was pretty tough on both my father and his brother Everett. So he came up pretty hard, and everything he got, he worked for. So he knew what hard work was, and he knew what being frugal was all about. For example, during the Depression—which we all suffered, you know, in the thirties—by golly, one thing he couldn't stand was for any waste, even if it was a potato on the ranch or in the sheep camp being peeled a little too thick! He'd just go up in the air if he just thought they were wasting anything. But he was a good, honorable man.

What did he do at the dinner table? Make you clean up your plate?

Oh, yeah, you bet! We ate at home—on this very table that we're sitting at today—very formally at night.

All of you?

Yeah, Dad at the head of the table and Mother at the foot. She always had help in the

house: a cook and we ate in courses, which we all hated, and one thing and another. But I remember Dad at the head of the table carving the meat or whatever it was.

Real formal? Was he formal?

Well, he tried to be, but he couldn't be for very long. So he'd always break it up by saying, "Alright, this is what supper is. If you don't like it, supper's over." You know, and stuff like that.

Was there conversation at the table?

Oh, yeah, a lot of conversation, about family stuff, you know, and the kids.

The day's work?

Yeah. And then he was one of the first members when they organized the Bureau of Land Management, the old Taylor Grazing Boards in the early thirties. He was on there until the time that we sold the outfit. He was on the Advisory Board in The Elko District and The Winnemucca District both. He was a director on the banking, the Protection Credit Association, which was a farm-related bank. And he was involved through the Masonic Lodge. I believe he was in the Shrine.

Was a lot of this in the later part of his life?

No, no, this was early.

So they got to like him after...

Oh, yeah, yeah.

He must have been very bright?

Oh, a very bright man. A very, very bright man. Yeah, he could add sums up in his head

while you were putting it down on a piece of paper. He was really a sharp man, but he was an impatient man.

He was so bright that if you weren't as quick...

Yeah, and he was quite a disciplinarian.

Like what? Give me a few examples.

Well, I mean, like schoolwork, for example. By golly, you'd better bring home big grades, or else you were grounded. And I was one of those if I got a "C" or something, that was good enough for me. I spent plenty of nights studying that nobody else had to do, you know! But that's just the kind of man he was: smart, and he was respected. He was president of the—they used to have a Sheep Commission in this state that more or less governed the animal health of sheep and one thing and another. He was a member of that board for years and years.

Was he the kind of father who you could confide in or do things with?

Oh, yeah, you bet! Yeah, that's one thing. When we were kids—I just hope I can find some pictures before we're all done with this—one or the other was *always* with him, in the car, going someplace.

Oh, that's nice!

Oh yeah, he was really, really good that way. But like I say, if he said "jump!" you asked "how high?"

You didn't answer back!

No.

How was he with your mom?

Oh, they were good. They got along good, they really did. They both respected each others fields, and one thing and another. And of course Dad, you know, his impatience and his frugality—you know, Mother wasn't raised that way, and it took her a little adjusting to learn that you had to conserve a little once in a while. But after she learned, boy, she *really* learned!

[laughs] Now let's go to your mom. The things I've read about her, as I said before, I just wish I had met her and been able to interview her. Tell me about your mom.

Well, she was quite a lady. She was vivacious, she loved people, she loved to read, nobody's problem was too big for her to listen to, I don't care *who* they were! She had friends in all races, creeds, and colors—and I mean a lot of them! And she had quite a library. In fact, before we had a county library, she had the library in town, and people were always borrowing books.

Really?!

I can remember when we were kids, after school there used to be a constant flow of either kids or teachers borrowing books and returning them.

Was that in your home?

In the home, yeah.

Was that from her own books?

Her own library, yeah.

What kind of reading did she prefer?

Everything: from novels to the heavy stuff. In later years, she got to where she liked detective stories and things, you know. But she belonged to the Book of the Month Club and whatever. Whatever book club or magazine club there was, she belonged.

Did she read to you a lot when you were little?

Oh yeah! When we were little, yeah. A lot of that, yeah.

And did she buy you books as gifts and encourage reading?

Oh yeah, a lot of books. Yeah, in fact we all had our favorites. So every birthday and Christmas, we got another book.

Was there music in the home?

Some. Well, yeah, in the old days it was the phonograph and then the radio and what-not. But there were always records and they both loved music.

What kind of music?

Well, opera and.. . good music, classical music.

Did you kids follow in liking classical, or did you move into other kinds?

Well we always all just liked music.

Okay, then back to your mother. She seems like a strong woman.

Very strong. During the Depression there were many of the outfits that went out of business, but because of her being so tenacious and fighting, she was able to

convince the bankers that we could make it and they went along with her and were able to pull the outfit out—one of the few. In fact, one thing that both she and Dad did, you know, during the Depression—everybody was broke. Well, you know, the government ruled that wages were a lost cause. I mean, if you were broke, you didn't have to pay them. But one thing my people did—and it was probably in 1950-something—they found the last fellow in Spain that they hadn't paid off—they paid every man every nickel that he was ever owed. That was the integrity. And this followed through, hopefully, in the three of us boys and our families. But that's one thing...And that's why I think they had the respect of everybody. And I tell you, I don't know how many hundreds and fifties and two hundred dollars that were lent to people here in this town, but nobody will ever know about it. And a lot of it paid back, but I'll bet there's a lot that wasn't. But people with troubles, they could go to her. Like for example, during the Depression, I can think there were several families that had a lot of kids, and they were people that were broke every week. It was one of my jobs, as I got old enough, to go with the truck driver of the outfit out and sack up potatoes and bring them in and leave them on these people's steps for them.

Oh, how wonderful.

That's just the way they were.

How was Christmas celebrated in your home? or other holidays?

Well, Christmas was *too* big. Always a big tree with lots of presents. In fact, this is the one place I think Mother and Dad had their only arguments. "Louise, you spend too much money, you're spoiling these boys!"

Did she get a lot of presents?

Oh, yeah, she loved presents. She got presents—like I say, from people, my God, just *everybody* loved Louise Marvel!

What other kinds of celebrations? Let's take birthdays. Were there birthday celebrations?

Well, in the early years, parties alright, but as we all grew older, no.

When you were young in the house?

Yeah. But always, you know, nice gifts. Like for example, on certain birthdays, twenty-fifth birthday and the fortieth birthday, were special to her for some reason.

But I mean when you were kids in the house. Would she bake a cake? And would you sing "Happy Birthday"?

Oh, yeah, there were cakes. Of course she always had a cook. But we always had parties and had all the neighborhood kids.

From the time you were a very little boy, were your parents already financially successful?

Yeah, in those days, the thing was, the livestock people and some of your mining people in those days, they had all the money that there was. But back then, if you had ten thousand dollars, you had a lot of money! You know, a pair of Levis was fifty cents or a dollar, things like that. And you could buy ten loaves of bread for a dollar or something like that, so your money really went someplace.

And I think here your houses cost less than in big cities, too, right?

Oh, sure, I imagine. And so I just think they were into something that there was always a little money until the Depression.

Were they affected during the Depression?

Oh, yeah, you bet! Heck, I an remember we used to sell...In those days, to show you how we've regressed in some ways in Battle Mountain, we used to have a movie theater here when we were kids growing up. So to go to the movie on Saturday night, we'd go out in the granary, which was behind the house, and we'd sack wheat up, take it up and sell it to one of the stores so they could sell it for chicken feed, to get our money to go to the show with.

What happened to the theater? Why isn't there one now?

Oh, I don't know what ever happened. They tore it down and that was it.

Is anyone—now that the town is so big—talking about bringing it back?

I don't think so.

Do you think the television and VCR has done away with that?

I think television, yeah.

Now back to your paren I was reading an article about your mother which led me to believe your father died before she did?

Yeah, he died in 1974.

When did your mother die?

She died in 1982.

What was her life like after your father died?

Well, the thing where Mother was lucky, she had the three boys all living right here in the area, and quite a few of the grandchildren, plus her friends, so she always had somebody. It was tough, really tough on her. The last two or three years of her life, it was much tougher because she was sick too. But Dad died of cancer and he didn't die a very easy death. Of course she died of cancer too, but hers wasn't quite as hard, I don't think. But Dad was alive for quite a few years with his. But I think after he was gone and after a year or two passed, it started to hit her extra hard.

Did she stay in the big house?

Oh yes, she stayed there all alone.

She stayed there until she died?

Yeah, until we finally took her to the hospital, and she died up here in the hospital. But she always did have a housekeeper to stay with her. She had one real wonderful Indian lady by the name of Jessie Leach, who was with her for...She helped raise all of *our* kids, the grandkids. In fact, she's still alive, lives down here at the Indian colony. And she had another girl who was a niece of Jessie's. After Jessie got too old to work, her niece stayed and took care of Mother until she died. So she always had somebody. But one of us boys or one or two of the wives *always* dropped in at least once a day and maybe twice, and friends like Carmen and all kinds of people, always on the telephone. You could call her on the telephone and you could visit for hours. She always had something to talk about.

She was a bright lady.

Oh, yeah, very bright Well, you know, she was the first woman to ever be elected “Cattlegirl of the Year” in this state. She was on the State Park Commission.

She was ahead of her time, for women.

Yeah.

Tell me a little more about her personality. I read one little article that said how loquacious she was.

Oh yeah.

And outgoing.

Yeah, very outgoing. And you could go to her house and she'd make you so welcome. That's what I say, she had people from all walks, of every kind of people. And I don't want to sound like being pretentious, or anything either, but she loved people and they loved her.

Was she a religious woman?

Well, yeah, she was an Episcopalian. In the later years, she wasn't too much, but she took care of the Episcopal church books for, I'll bet you thirty or forty years.

As a volunteer?

Yeah. Whenever they were short, she anted up. In fact, her mother built the Episcopal church here in Battle Mountain.

Really?!

That's the story.

Did she have a sense of humor?

Oh yeah, quite a sense of humor.

Did your dad have a sense of humor?

Oh yeah. He was a terrible tease! Yeah, a real bad tease.

Did they have a chance, after they sold the ranch, to do any traveling or have any fun?

Dad always wanted to, but Mother just wouldn't do it. She used to always talk about it, “Oh, yes, we're going to Europe, and I'd like to go back to Wales and see my birth place.” There's still relatives over there.

But they never did?

Never did. You couldn't even hardly get her to go to Reno, for example, or to Elko. What she did, she just got to the place—particularly after Dad died—she just wanted to stay in that house. You couldn't even get her to come up here. My brother lives across the street—couldn't get her to go there.

But what about when he was still alive?

Well, in younger years, yeah, I can remember they used to have parties down there for their friends, and there used to be social dances.

Did they dance?

Oh yes, beautiful dancers! Real good, yeah. But in later years, it all changed. I remember as a kid, it was nothing to make three or four trips a year to San Francisco to stay.

What would they do in San Francisco?

Well, a lot of it was business and a lot of it was to go to plays. And of course she had a twin sister who lived there at that time. So they'd just go there to visit.

One of the things I like to ask is when children grow up, if they stay here or if they leave, because it's interesting to me how many stay in the state. Tell me, not just your children, but just very briefly, about your brothers' children: who went away? how many stayed or came back? Start with yours.

Well, let's see. Well, my daughter—of course she married and moved to Reno. And then Rick—he would be in Battle Mountain if he didn't have that business down there. His wife is also from here.

But your children are in the state?

Yeah, they're in the state. And then John, the youngest brother, his son Johnny is an attorney in Elko, and his daughter Sharon is a school teacher in Carson City. And their youngest daughter Michelle lives in Denver. She's married to some kind of an evangelist or something, and she's a nurse. They live there. And then Tom—now that's a tough one to figure out, there's so many in that family. He's got a daughter and a son who both live out at Lamoille, south of Elko. He's got one son that lives here in Battle Mountain. And then the other three or four kids I guess live in California: his oldest son is a jet pilot for American Airlines, and then the others are either married to ranchers or *are* ranchers. So in that particular family, Tommy, the oldest son, he's the only one that's not in the livestock business—he's a jet pilot. The rest are involved in some way with agriculture or cattle.

That's interesting. What are some of the things that you are now interested in and are pursuing?

[laughs] Oh, not much of anything except my grandkids! The thing with me, it takes so much of my time just taking care of Mary, you know. I've lost a big part of my vision, so I can't really drive too much anymore. I can get around town pretty good, and the doctor tells me there's no reason I can't drive on the highway, but I know better myself, so I don't do it. I *could* in an emergency, but I'm not going to.

Do you have someone to call on if you have to go to one of the hospitals?

Oh yeah, a lot of people. In fact, our daughter-in-law, Nancy, in Winnemucca, Rick's wife, all you've got to do is just drop a hat and she's right here to get you—and Marsha would be too, from Reno, if she wasn't teaching, you know. But this little Nancy, she's quite a little girl. She's more like a daughter than she is a daughter-in-law, that's the beauty of it. And then we have friends here, like right across the street, Bruce Swackhamer—you interviewed him, I think—one of his daughters lives right across the street from me here, and she's always telling me, "Now, Dick, if you or Mary need to go anyplace, you call me, I'm there!"

Oh, that's the nice thing about a small town, that you might not find [elsewhere].

Yeah.

I'm sure there must be, but is there anything that you can tell me over the period of time, about the changes in Battle Mountain that might help people who won't ever see it the way

it was when it was small, that you want to add to your interview?

Well, you know, as an old-timer, you say, "Well, we like the town the way it was," the old gravel streets as we can remember them. I just got on the tail-end of this, but the town pumps in the middle of the street, you know, and everybody packing their water. [laughs] And then a few artesian wells after that, and the outhouses in the back yard. And I think people *cared* more for each other. I think people still care, but people are so busy doing other things, the home life just doesn't seem to be there anymore, even for the kids. I notice it in our own famili there's either baseball practice to go to, or this or that or the other thing. It's different, it's a fast-paced life. And I know I sometimes get disgusted and say, "Well, I wish to the devil we'd go back to the old days." But it's good. There's been a lot of good people come in here. As far as progress from the business communities, in some ways maybe we are better, but in the old days we still had two or three good grocery stores, you had a theater as I mentioned before, you had shoe repair places, you had your own dry cleaners, you had your own bakery shop.

What happened to them?

Well, you know, as time goes on, the Mom and Pop thing, you know in the old days where you could get ten cents for a loaf of bread, you made three cents. You know, and then it got to the place where all your laws and rules and sanitation things and that, it just...People can jump in their cars now. The thing is, we were more or less "prisoners" of our areas in the old days.

Because of the roads and the transportation?

Yeah, you couldn't go. I can remember going from here to Winnemucca as a kid, and taking three-and-a-half to four hours just to Winnemucca! I know we'd go down, say, like on a Friday night, and my aunt and uncle lived there at the time, so I'd want to stay because I had a cousin who was just my age. So my uncle would be coming up here on Monday morning. We'd leave Winnemucca at four o'clock so I could be here at school at eight o'clock! So that's the difference, see. But you know, you just wonder, it's so easy to say, "Oh, yeah, it was so much better the way it was." I think morally and socially it was better. But I guess you can't stop progress.

And then there's always advantages and disadvantages according to where you are in the picture. For instance, when Highway 80 moved out of town, I'm sure people who weren't involved in businesses were tickled—less traffic through town. Business people, it took away some business. So there's always the two sides, right?

Yeah. *But*, the thing with the business, sure, I think for a little while it hurt them a little, but you know, people have funny patterns: for example, I go to Reno, I've always stopped in Lovelock, so I *still* stop in Lovelock, to say hello somebody, get a cup of coffee. You still do it!

But you're a local. What about me? Let's take a stranger, and I'm from California, going up to Idaho. Am I going to stop here, or am I going to stop at Winnemucca?

Well, you're going to stop at Winnemucca or Elko, that's true.

That's it.

That's it. Sure, that's true.

But now I'm glad I stopped at Battle Mountain!

Well, I'm glad you did too! But you know, really, there are a lot of good people in this town. But just going back to what it was in the old days, you know, the old local telephone operators. Well, our son had a habit of—we never did figure out how he got out of the yard—but taking off for my mother's house, right down the street here. He had to cross a highway and a railroad track. Well, he'd get down here to the main street and the telephone office is right there. They'd go out and get him, call "Mary, we've got Rick down here," she'd go get him. Well today, nobody would pay any attention!

But what about in these towns, when your generation is no longer here, if new people didn't come into town...

Oh, sure.

Like the thing that worries me about Austin: When these older ones are gone and there's no new people coming in.

I'll tell you something about Austin—I'm very fond of Austin, to be honest with you—Austin will survive. There might only be two or three people there, but Austin will survive!

I'm interviewing, you know. I love the place and the people.

Oh, me too.

But when I interview them, the older people have to leave because there's no medical attention there.

That's the sad part.

And they're moving. They're moving to Fallon or...

And they're dying.

Well, but even before they die, the ones I'm interviewing say "We have to move. I hate to, but there's no doctors here."

It's sad, but I guess that's progress. That's another thing, getting back to the old days: Austin had a doctor years ago. They had a hospital, the county hospital.

When they had more activity?

Well, yeah. And Battle Mountain, we *always* had two doctors here. And in fact, one of the doctors, a Dr. Hawkins, had his own hospital. And then you had the county hospital, so we had two hospitals. So in some ways, it's progress, in other ways...But the problem is anymore, people's wants are so much greater too. They *expect* so much more. Like Dr. Clark and Dr. Hawkins were good doctors, but I'll bet today, people would say, "Oh, they were just a couple of horse doctors." But they weren't! But technology has gotten so and everything that they've got to keep up.

And also it costs so much more to become a doctor, that the young people have to make more to pay back their loans.

My oldest grandson in Reno, Jeff, I told you about him. He wants to be an ophthalmologist, but getting him through! We're going to do it someday or another. Even though his mother and dad are divorced, his dad's been awful good to him and he still supports him and takes care of him. And between all of them, if he wants to become a doctor, he'll *become* a doctor! We'll see to it by

hook or by crook! But it's going to cost, good Lord!

So they're in debt for a long time.

Yeah, in debt before they ever start.

I think Battle Mountain is expanding and growing, and I wonder what you see it like in let's say, within the next ten years.

Well, it all, to me, depends on the mining at the present time—unless they can entice some other types of industries to come in here. Even the service industries we have, like these chemical plants and one thing and another—it's all mining—related.

Is there enough mineral and other products for mining still in the soil around here?

Well, even though some of these mines are starting to phase out, they're finding new ones. I understand that southeast of town there's another big mine going to start. And, true, the life of these mines is, they say, oh, eight, ten, twelve years, but they always seem to find new ones. And then more come in. But there may come a time when they do deplete it, and then I don't know, like a town like Battle Mountain, what their future would be. Unless it's just because of *expansion* that you're going to have people living in these places because there's no place else to go.

I know people are moving to Nevada from California and other places because you have a better tax structure than most other states.

That's right, Of course there's an awful lot of other areas that are going to develop first, *but* you take like your Reno area and that with their water problems and one thing and

another... That's what I keep telling them here, is they've got to keep making sure they have good quality water, and keep pushing with that as a selling point, even to industry.

How do they do that?

Well, just through word of mouth and through Chamber of Commerce.

I mean, is that because this is a good water system here?

Well, right now it is. Of course it's going to be outdated here pretty quick. But I mean, if they keep on top of it. Just like we have an airport out here which is another thing that we took over, after I became commissioner, from the government. They've got expansion out there, if they could just, at the right time *sell* it to somebody for the land around it, to develop, well, hangar facilities, storage facilities, and maybe small factories.

Is the airport only for private planes?

No, no, it's a public airport.

When you say "public airport," are there commercial flights, if you want to fly here?

Well, they have had several tries, but it just hasn't worked out for them.

Is it for individual planes that people own? Is that what it is?

Well, there are some of those, and the mining companies. That's what it is, mainly, now, yeah. And then of course the Bureau of Land Management, they keep their fire-fighting planes out there.

But there's no way to, say—like, I have to drive up here when I come. There's no way to say, "Fly me to Battle Mountain"?

No.

No private person has developed their own shuttle planes?

Well, we have a couple of people who do have these so-called private flights, but they're pretty expensive.

For instance, that would be a way to get people quickly to a Reno hospital?

Oh yeah.

Do you have that?

They do have Care flight that comes in from Reno.

Oh, do they? if someone's ill?

Yeah, in fact, Mary twice has had to be flown out of here, years ago.

So they do have that.

Oh yeah, they have that.

It's just very expensive?

Well, yes, it's expensive, but thank God if you have insurance.

But does insurance pay for that?

Yeah.

For emergency flights?

Yeah.

Is there anything else about Lander County or your activities that I'm not asking you that you want to share before we close the interview?

I think we're hitting it pretty good.

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for sharing your time and your experiences and your knowledge with us. Thank you so much.

It's a pleasure, and I hope I can give you some more, if I can think of anything we haven't covered.

I hope so. And also, we'll be looking at and borrowing some of your photos and documents. This is the end of this interview session.

This is a short second session with Richard Marvel at his home, and it's June 14, 1993. Nice to be back! You were going to share with us some information that we didn't cover last time, so I'll let you start.

Well, what I wanted to bring up was the W.T. Jenkins Company, the type of help it had. You asked me a question about what I thought made the bigger outfits work like they did, and it was the help. We had Indian people that were very faithful to the businesses they worked for. There are some of the families still here, such as the Williams family, the Blossom family, and the Deckers—just many, many more that are still in the area. Some of them moved up to Elko and have their own ranches now, but they were just good, loyal people. And then another thing that we had, we had a lot of Chinese cooks on the ranches,

and before my time, they even had Chinese shepherders.

Where did they come from?

After the railroads were built, there were many of them here, and I just think they took these jobs on the ranches as cooks and gardeners and whatever they could find.

Then they were living in Lander County, around this area?

Oh yes. I don't know exactly where it was, but there was a small Chinese community in the area. I've heard stories of where it was, but I've never been able to find it. But we had Chinese laundries and Japanese laundries and these types of things.

Are there old city directories that might show how many lived here? What time period are you talking about?

Well, as far as the ranch cooks and so forth, I can remember this in the thirties and forties. And the Chinese shepherders, I think, went back to, oh, in the early 1900s, maybe the late 1800s. But the laundries—at least the Japanese laundry which was here, went out of business in World War II when they interred all the Japanese.

You mentioned the Indians. Can you tell me in more detail about some of them, and was there a reservation? Tell me a little more about the Indian population here.

Oh yes, they have their own colonies. The original colony was just here on the west end of town. And here about ten years ago they built a new colony out about a mile-and-a-half. But

these Indian people, they were cowboys, they were shepherders, they were ranchers, the wives were all cooks and laundresses and so forth. And another colorful thing we used to have, you could always tell when it was spring: the Indian ladies about two o'clock in the afternoon, they'd all show up on Front Street and they'd sit on the curb in all their fancy, colorful clothes. And you could always tell it was spring when the Indian ladies showed up.

Were they an artistic group of people here? Did they create jewelry or any of the beadwork?

Very artistic: many of them were artists, freehand, and leather craft, beadwork, and baskets. In fact, we have some beadwork here in the house. I don't know the history of it, but it was done by a local Indian. And my two brothers and I started out in the cowboy camps with Indian cowboys, and a lot of what we learned, we learned from the Indians.

Can you give me more of a description? because I've never heard that from anyone before. And so tell me a little bit in more detail. Was this the first time they had the opportunity with your father's company? Did you teach them, or were they already doing that kind of work before your grandfather [hired them]? Tell me how that started.

Well, the Indian people were just natural horsemen and livestock people. All the different outfits around here employed them: in fact, they were really the main source of employees for many, many years. And in some areas, there still are quite a few of the Indian cowboys and the ranchers. They were just a natural. Of course, you know, horses and Indians, they go together, and the outdoors. And they just made fine, fine help.

Are there any photos of that? Because although we know they were on homes, you're the first one to tell me that they were hired on these ranches, and so it's quite fascinating. Are there any photos, do you know?

I would say that if anybody had photos of them, it would probably be somebody in the Lemaire family. We've looked through pictures here, and we just don't seem to be able to find any of the Indian people. But they were certainly a very, very big part of all the early-day ranching in this area.

Were there any black cowboys in Nevada? I've heard a few people mention that.

Well, I never had the opportunity to work with any of them, but there were several of the other outfits that I understand *did* have some black cowboys. And they were really, I guess top-notch help too.

Getting back to Battle Mountain, was there the mingling of any of the blacks and Indians with the other population here?

Yes, we had one really outstanding family: the father's name was Henry Barry. There were either six or seven children—I can't exactly remember how many now—but we all lived in the same neighborhood. And in fact my wife and I had several of them as playmates. There was a Dorothy Barry and a Henry Barry. Henry became quite a prominent local boxer. Then there were two or three other sisters. But they all worked for different people around town. In fact, one of them, Helena, worked for my mother for years. And then later on, she married and moved to Winnemucca, and a relative of theirs by the name of Helena Robinson came, and she worked for my mother and more or less

raised my two brothers and myself until we were high school age. But this Barry family, they were very outstanding. Mr. Barry had been an assayer over at the Cortez Mines, and then he moved to Battle Mountain and he was the freight agent for the Southern Pacific Railroad. And they were really a very, very outstanding family. The thing with all of us, we never thought of anything about black and white: they were just accepted and they were a part of us.

I know I heard that there was a separate government school for the Indian children, and then later they became integrated. Did the children interact? the Indians and the non-Indians? and the Mexicans? Did they all play together?

Yes. But I believe I mentioned how artistic and talented that most of these Indian children were. And we all used the same playgrounds and played together. And it was always a pleasure, on certain days of the month they'd have an open house and we'd all get to go over and look at all the beautiful free drawing and painting that the Indian children had done. In fact, there was one boy from here by the name of Leland Blossom who went on to be a quite famous artist in San Francisco.

Now, you said Leland Blossom: were they part Indian?

They were Indian.

The Blossom family?

Well, what they do, the Indian people, a lot of them, took the names of the people they worked for.

Oh, like the slaves did.

Yeah. In fact, the Blossom family—there were several Blossom families in the area, not related. And I don't know exactly which Blossom family these Indians took their name from, but the story is that that's how they became Blossoms.

Well that's a big contribution, because many people wouldn't know that, and this is the first interview that I've heard that! Anything else that you can remember that would add to this segment that is so important?

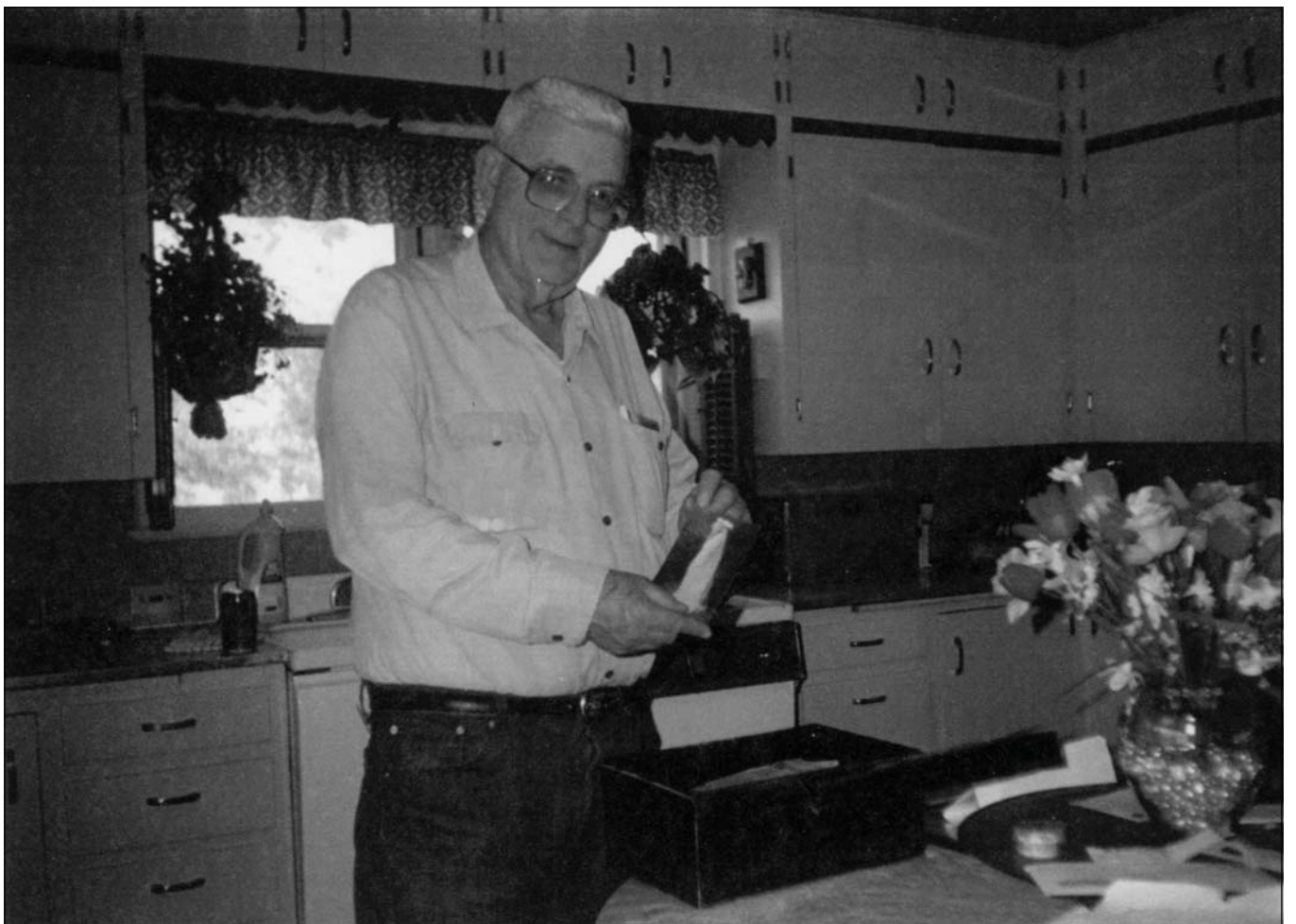
Well, one thing, the Indians had their fandangos—that was their big celebrations and their dances. And every fall they'd have a big one and the whole town would be invited, and the kids and the grownups and everybody would go in the evening, and everybody would dance with them in the round dances. Parents would always be mad because it'd be a school night and we'd all get home late. But it was really something to look forward to. They ordinarily did it around the time that they harvested the pine nuts, which were a very staple food for them.

Anything else before we end this important section?

Well, I really can't think of much else.

Well, that was a wonderful contribution, because all of that is new—no one else shared that—so I thank you so much. And this is the end of the second session.

RICHARD TREHARNE MARVEL
PHOTOGRAPHS



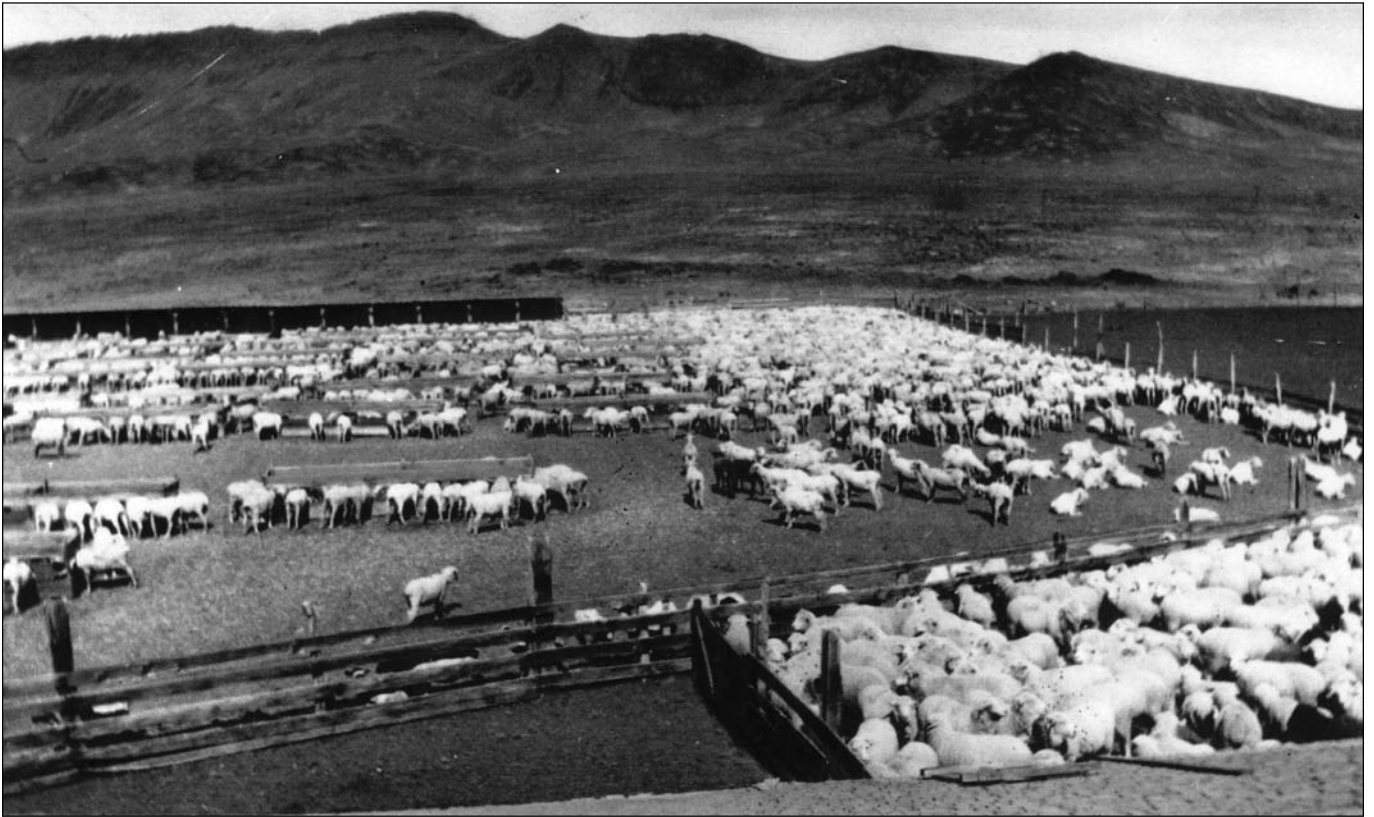
RICHARD MARVEL, MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Mr. and Mrs. William T. Jenkins, grandparents of Richard T. Marvel.

(Original photograph owned by Richard Marvel)



W.T. Jenkins sheep shearing corral (late 20s, early 30s).

(Original photograph owned by Richard Marvel)

RICHARD TREHARNE MARVEL

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ANITA PEER

Preface

Anita Peer was appointed by the county commissioners as matron of the Lander County Hospital of Austin. When Anita first came to Austin as a bride in 1926, her mother-in-law, Lavinia Tonkin, was the matron.

Anita lived in the hospital with her two daughters taking care of several indigents as well as patients.

This interview is limited to Anita's recollections of the few years in the late thirties when she was matron of the hospital.

This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Anita Peer at her home on Reese Street in Austin, Nevada, July 23, 1993.

Sylvia Arden: Good afternoon, Anita. I'm so pleased that you allowed me to come to take a brief interview with you on your experiences

here in Austin, especially at the hospital. Would you first tell us your full name?

Anita Peer: Juanita Gladys Peer.

And where were you born?

I was born in Ethridge, Montana.

And what date?

Four ten ten [April 10, 1910].

Can you tell me when you first came to Lander County, the Austin area, in Nevada?

In 1926.

And what brought you here at that time?

I came here as a bride.

Where did you come from? Where were you married?

Well, we were married in Elko, Nevada.

Can you tell me what Austin looked like to you when you first arrived? Your first glimpse.

Well, it was a very nice, small town. I believe, though, that there was snow on the ground at the time that we came here.

What month was that, do you remember?

Well, it was probably in March of that year.

When you first came, did you have a place to stay?

Oh yes.

And what was that?

We stayed in a little yellow house way up on the hill and it belonged to my mother-in-law.

I see, so your husband was from this area?

Yes.

When you came, did you live with your mother-in-law?

No.

When you settled into Austin, tell me a little bit just about the town—about the stores, were there many stores here?

Yes there were several stor The Commercial, and Murphy's Store, and there was a little dry goods store at the time in which they sold a lot of different things.

Did you do all your shopping here in Austin? There was enough here then?

Oh yes, and through the catalogues.

Oh, which catalogues especially?

Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck.

Did you have a family here in Austin? Any children born here?

No, my children were both born in Battle Mountain.

I want to move on because mainly what we want to know is about your work at the hospital because the health and medical situation here especially now, is such a problem. Can you tell me when you first arrived, what kind of medical care there was, or doctors?

Well there was a Doctor Bellinger here at the time. He'd been here for a good many years.

And was he here with a family? Did he live here?

I don't believe he had a family yet, as I recall.

But he lived here?

Oh yes, he lived here in Austin.

Was there a hospital?

Yes.

Can you describe it to us and tell me what it was called?

Well, it was the Lander County Hospital of Austin.

So it would serve the whole county?

Well, no, just Austin. It's a pretty good-sized building with lots of rooms and regular hospital setup.

Was it like the building that it is today? Was it the same size?

Very much. Very much the same.

It looks almost like a house?

Oh yes. Yes it does. Well, the family lived there.

A family lived in the hospital?

Well, yes. The time that I came here, my mother-in-law, Lavinia Tonkin was the matron.

I see, and she lived there?

Yes, she lived right there

With a family, or herself?

By herself.

And about how many patients could they serve, could stay there?

Oh, possibly half-a-dozen or maybe more.

And were children born there?

Yes.

Did they have the one doctor? Did they have any nurses?

Not that I know of. Mrs. Tonkin was the matron and she took care of whoever was here, mostly indigent at that time, or whoever they'd bring in that was ill.

Tell us who the indigents might be.

I can't remember very many of them, but I do remember one old fella—they called him Mitch, his name was Mitchell. I don't remember his last name.

Were these residents of Austin?

Yes, the old people that lived here. There was several there at the time. I don't recall any other names.

Well, we don't need names, but do you mean by indigents, did they live there, like an old-age home?

Yes, yes, very much like that.

I see, okay. So that when they no longer could take care of themselves?

That's right.

And then Mrs. Tonkin took care of them? What was her first name?

Lavinia was her name.

Lavinia Tonkin, that was your mother-in-law?

Yes.

And would residents, if they needed it, did they have operations in that hospital?

No, I don't think so. Nothing major anyway. Maybe little minor things.

But they did deliver babies?

Well, later, yes.

Later they did.

Yes.

Did the doctor go there every day or regularly to check patients?

I'm sure he did, yes, because I didn't know Dr. Bellinger too well, and I wasn't around the hospital very much at that time.

Now tell me what date was it when you did get involved with the hospital? How long after you arrived?

Oh well, that was several years, because we moved different places. Then when I came back to Austin, I...

Oh, you mean you left Austin?

I left Austin.

I see. And how many years were you away from Austin? approximately.

Well, I really couldn't say offhand how many years.

I mean five? ten? two?

Oh yes, it would have been quite a while because we worked different places.

Okay, so maybe ten years?

Could have been.

So when you came back, had the hospital changed from what you remembered it?

Oh no.

The building structure was the same?

Just the same.

And was Lavinia Tonkin still the matron?

No, no.

Did you then settle here?

Yes, I stayed here in Austin.

Had Austin changed much in that interim when you were gone and came back? Did it look any different?

No, not much. You know, it's an old mining camp.

And about the same stores? Did they still have those stores?

No.

Were you still able to shop here?

Oh yes, there was a store here but you got what you needed.

Did you ever go into Fallon or other places when you needed big shopping?

Oh yes. Same as we do now.

How were the roads then?

Well, the roads were pretty good. They were paved and this is the main highway through here.

And it was paved by then?

Oh yes, my yes.

So then this must have been like maybe in the forties? Was it after World War II?

No, it was before that. It was in the thirties. Late in the thirties, yes.

Now tell me from the first start about your involvement in the hospital, and also of your interest in taking care of people.

I had two daughters and it was a job. It was something to do. And I was appointed by the county commissioners as matron of the hospital.

Now you were appointed—by then had you lived here enough so that they knew you?

Oh yes.

How long had you lived here before you were appointed? About.

But I'd been here probably three or four years.

So did that mean you had to live at the hospital?

Yes, I lived there, me and my two daughters.

Oh, you lived there, I see. Was there a separate living compartment?

No, it's all one building. As you go in the one end, the east end is the kitchen and then

you go up the stairs and then off of the kitchen was a bedroom and my daughters and I shared the bedroom, and then the rest was for the patients.

Were some of their rooms downstairs?

No, all upstairs.

So you had that separation.

Just a basement underneath.

Okay, so now what were your responsibilities as the matron?

Well, I cooked for the old fellas—there was mostly men there—two or three, sometimes more, it depends. I cooked for them and kept house and cleaned and kept them clean.

That was a big responsibility.

Well yeah.

Did you have any other people coming into the hospital who were either sick or had injuries or were having babies?

Well, after Dr. Bellinger left, then there's another doctor came, he was an old army doctor and there was a fella from Kingston, that's when they had the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camps out there, and he had pneumonia, and I can't recall the doctor's name, but he was an old army doctor and knew what he was doing. He took care of this fella, and of course I did as much nursing as necessary and then they transferred to him to Reno. And then this doctor left and they appointed Dr. Hawkins from Battle Mountain—Dr. E.H. Hawkins.

Did Dr. Hawkins devote his time to both places, or did he move down here?

No, he moved here to Austin.

And became the lead doctor.

Yes, he was the doctor, County Health Physician.

The county doctor. Was that a county hospital?

Yes.

So, let's say this man with pneumonia...

Well he was gone before Dr. Hawkins came.

But let's go back when he was there, did you have to be the one, did you give him medication and report to the doctor on his health? Did you have that responsibility?

Well, anything that came up—but the doctor took care of the medications and things like that.

He'd come in every day?

Oh yes.

Okay, so you didn't have to worry about that. So let's get to the period with Dr. Hawkins. Did he deliver babies in that hospital?

Oh yes.

Was there a separate room for the mothers and babies, separate privacy from the indigents?

Oh yes, we had a separate place for 'em.

It looks like such a small place for all of that.

Well they're small rooms but then we had...

Was there a delivery room?

No.

Where did he deliver, right in the bedroom?

Right. In the bedroom.

How long were you matron of that hospital?

Oh, possibly three or four years or so.

During that time, were there any difficult births that might have needed a caesarian?

When I was there, there was only one set of twins born: Mary Lou and Sugar. Richard, but we always called him Sugar.

Why?

I don't know. His family called him Sugar and I've called him Sugar all my life that I've known him.

And were you there in the hospital?

I assisted the doctor.

You assisted the doctor? Did they give you some training?

No. I just did whatever the doctor...But Dr. Hawkins was very kind and very good because we used to discuss things along the medical lines and he would show me and tell me things, but he told me what to do.

And you were bright and learned quickly?

About six.

Well, I don't know about that.

Did they come up and see the babies?

Did you enjoy that work? Did you get a lot of satisfaction?

Well they lived right there,

Oh yes.

So did they get involved?

How long did the twins and their mother have to stay in the hospital?

Oh yes, whenever I'd have the babies out in the kitchen to bathe them.

Clara was the mother. Clara Gandolfo.

Were there other babies born there?

How long did she and the babies have to stay in the hospital?

Not while I was there.

I think they stayed there a week or ten days.

You got double! That's wonderful. Did you keep in touch with Clara and the twins?

Forever and a day.

So you got to know those babies.

Were they like your family?

Oh yes.

Oh yeah, I guess.

Did you bathe them? Did you have to take care of them?

Did you help in any other way with any new babies?

From beginning to end. [laughter]

That's wonderful. Were there any photographs of that?

Well, there was another doctor came after Dr. Hawkins passed away, but I was no longer with the hospital at the time. But Dr. Benson came here, so there was no need for me to...

I imagine there is somewhere. I don't have any really, that I know of.

Did you continue your expertise and your caring and all that you learned, outside of the hospital? Did you use those talents?

How old were your daughters then?

Well, we came when Bonnie was six years old because that was her first year of school and that was a couple a years later, I guess, or so.

Well, I assisted Dr. Hawkins when Phillip was born, Poncho Williams. That was Clara's child.

So one was eight and how old was the other?

So that's the younger brother of the twins?

Yes.

*And how old were the twins when he was born?
Were they running around yet?*

I can't really recall just how old they were.

*She must have been busy and happy that you
were there.*

I know there was two older boys; Jimmy Williams—we call him Bubby, and Ray Junior.

*Where did the doctors see their patients? At
the hospital? or did they have another medical
office in town?*

Dr. Hawkins saw his patients at the hospital, and if he thought it was necessary for an examination of some kind, or at his home.

*Did he have a separate room for the
examinations at the hospital?*

Yes he did. He had fixed up one little room with a table so that he could examine patients there if he felt it was necessary.

*So they would either come there or at his home.
Did he have a shingle out?*

I don't think so, Everybody in a small town like this, everyone knows where everybody else lives.

*And do you remember, in the time that you
lived here, when there was no doctor?*

Well, since Dr. Benson left, I don't recall of having a doctor here. Now we have a lady come in—a nurse practitioner come in once a week.

When did Dr. Benson leave?

Oh my, he didn't stay here more than... Well Dr. Hawkins passed away in 1950 and I'm sure Dr. Benson wasn't here much more than five years after that. Somewhere along that line.

So it's been a long, long time.

It's been a long time since we've had a doctor living here.

*So you were really here at the height of the best
medical care, it seems.*

Well, for Austin.

*For Austin, right. How long did you stay in
Austin? Have you stayed all the rest of the
years?*

No, I left Austin during the war. I lived down in Oakland and I worked for the Children's Hospital in Oakland for a short while.

*So your experience and your interest and
talents went on there. When did you come
back to Austin?*

Oh, along about 1947, 1948.

*Did you see any changes after the war? Did the
war affect Austin?*

Well there's always changes. There was still quite a bit of mining going on at that time and things, but...

Not too many changes?

Not an awful lot. Some of the old buildings have gone and things, and people are gone.

Well, I mainly wanted to get the history of the hospital and whatever you could share. Is there anything else that you have seen or want to add before we end the interview?

Well, I don't know of anything.

Well, what you've shared is a big help because we didn't get any of that information and that adds to the total information that we're gathering. So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I thank you for sharing those experiences with us.

Well you're very welcome.

ANITA PEER
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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COXIE ROBERTS

PREFACE

Coxie's father, Eldred Cox, was born and raised in Elko, Nevada. Her mother, Avis Riddle, was raised at Riddle, Idaho, named after her mother. Avis went to high school in Elko, boarding with family friends. There she met Eldred Cox. When they married, they moved to Owyhee, the Indian Reservation on the Idaho border where her father bought a trading post, consisting of a grocery and hardware store. Avis and Eldred worked with them in the trading post. Coxie, born in 1933, lived in a house with her grandparents, parents, sister and brother. All her playmates were Indian children and they played Indian games.

Coxie was nine when the trading post was sold. The family moved to Elko, then to Battle Mountain where her father worked for the Wells-Fargo Trucking company. Coxie wasn't happy about leaving Elko and her grandparents. Battle Mountain was much smaller than Elko and was dusty, with unpaved streets. She describes the busy train depot and the shipping of barite in ore cars.

When Coxie's father went to work at the Copper Canyon mine, the family moved out there, living in a house at an old abandoned mine up the canyon until a vacancy occurred closer to the main camp. Coxie, then twelve, tells about taking a bus to school in Battle Mountain. She describes the fun in the summer, hiking and walking to a swimming hole seven or eight miles to another canyon. In the winters, they would go sledding on homemade sleds and toboggans. Christmas and birthdays at the mining camp were happy celebrations by everybody.

Coxie married her best friend's brother, William Roberts, when she was only seventeen and he was eighteen. His family came from California, where his father had worked at a mine. When the mine closed down, and they heard of the copper boom in Nevada, they came to Copper Canyon, along with other families from Idaho, Utah, California and Nevada. After their marriage in 1950, they moved to Battle Mountain and William Roberts worked for Natomas, a company which came up to dredge for gold. He also

tended bar at night. Eventually, in 1962, he and a friend went into the barite mining business.

Coxie was busy with the three young children born within four years. As soon as her third child started school, Coxie went to work as a waitress for the Nevada Hotel. There was a big tourist trade in the summertime with a lot of traffic through town. She loved it! In 1986 Coxie started to work for the Battle Mountain Junior High School where she works as a secretary.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Coxie Roberts at Battle Mountain Junior High School, 650 Altenburg Avenue, Battle Mountain, Nevada, April 16, 1993.

Good afternoon, Coxie. Thank you for letting us interview you. Please tell us your full name, where you were born and when.

Coxie Roberts: Cecilia May Cox Roberts. I was born in Elko, [Nevada], April 30, 1933.

Would you tell us your paternal grandparents? Did they migrate here from another country?

My grandfather [Charles E. Cox, born October 23, 1875] came here from New York State, but we're not sure just exactly where he came from. When he was young, he and another brother and a sister settled in the Cherry Creek area, over out of Elko, in Elko County.

What brought them to Elko County in Nevada?

I really don't know.

Tell us about your grandmother on your father's side.

My grandmother [Maude May Kennedy Cox] was born [March 6, 1890] in Clover Valley, which is in Elko County. Her family—I think they had a ranch out in that area. And then they moved into Elko after they were married—my grandmother and my grandfather—and he worked for the railroad. She had several occupations, but the one I remember most was she worked in the J.P. Stevens Company in Elko.

Now, tell me what that company was.

It was a department-store-type—clothing and fabric, sewing material, and that kind of thing.

Now this is your father's parents?

Right.

So that was early for her to be working in that time period, wasn't it?

Uh-huh.

Then tell me, did they raise their family there in Elko?

Yes, my dad [Eldred A. Cox, born December 13, 1908, at Starr Valley, Nevada] and his sister and brother were raised in Elko.

And tell me about your mother's side of the family, her parents.

My grandfather was born in Marysville, California, moved to Virginia City when he was very young—I'm sure my great-grandfather was following the gold. And my

grandmother was born in Virginia City, so that's where they met. I think there's a couple of my great-aunts and uncles that are buried in Virginia City.

Did your mother's side of the family migrate from another country?

I don't know which generation.

Now let's get to your parents. You told me where your father and mother were born, but tell me a little bit about them before they met each other and married.

Well my mother [Avis L. Riddle, born November 15, 1913 at Bruneau, Idaho] was raised at Riddle, Idaho, which is named after my grandmother. It's just on the Idaho-Nevada border, just the other side of the Owyhee Indian Reservation. When they left Virginia City, my great-grandmother brought her... Well, I *think* my great-grandfather was alive at that time, and they had a ranch over in the Independence Valley.

Was it called the Riddle Ranch?

No, not at that time. Gosh, I can't remember the name, what it was called, but they sold it to one of the big cattle companies. My great-grandfather died, and he's buried over there in Independence Valley. So my grandmother took her boys—she had four boys—and they moved to this place just up on the Idaho border. My great-grandfather's brothers, a couple of them had ranches, and so she moved there with her boys and they all homesteaded a place. So at that time there were... I think there were five Riddle ranches. So naturally when they put a post office in, they called it Riddle.

Oh, the town?

The town. My mother was born in Bruno, Idaho, but she was raised on the ranch at Riddle.

With this big family?

Uh-huh. She had four sisters.

Did she tell you much about her life there?

Yeah, she's told me stories. They were all within buggy distance of each other, so they spent all their holidays together and did family things, picnics and that type thing with all of her sisters. My grandfather had a twin sister. He and his sister and one of his brothers married my grandmother, her brother, and one of her sisters.

Oh my! So a lot of intermarriage between both families.

Uh-huh, there was.

Okay. Now, so then where does your mother fit in here?

Her mother was born in Virginia City. Then my grandfather met her and married her and moved her to the ranch out there. And then my mother and her four sisters were born in Bruno, but then they came back to the ranch in Riddle and were raised in Riddle.

Now where did your mother meet your father?

My mother had to go to Elko to go to high school. In those days they boarded their high school students out with relatives or friends, and so my mother lived with a friend of the family in Elko and went to high school in Elko, and that's where she met my dad.

Now tell me then, from when they first married, what their life was like and how they finally moved—I believe—into Lander County, right?

Uh-huh.

Okay, do you want to tell me about that?

Well when they were first married, they moved to the Owyhee, which is the Indian Reservation on the Idaho border. It's called the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. The family had sold their ranches and my grandfather bought a trading post in Owyhee, and he and my grandmother and my father and my mother ran this trading post, which was the grocery store, the hardware store... That's what it was.

Is any of your family Indian?

No.

But they were able to get a lease or a contract for this trading post?

Uh-huh, yeah. I'm not sure how it worked in those days, but we were the only... Well, not the *only* white children on the reservation, because some of the people that worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs were white, and so there were a few of us.

So tell me from your earliest remembrances, what that was like, about the people, and the environment.

I wish I had paid closer attention!

Sure!

But we lived there until I was nine. So all my playmates were Indian children. They

bought their groceries at my grandfather's store. So we played Indian games.

Tell me what you lived in: What was your house like?

It was a nice house. I mean, for those days, it was a really nice house. We had indoor plumbing.

First, what year was this, about? You lived there until you were nine. What year did you go there?

Well, I went there right after I was born, so in 1933. We lived there until 1942?

So there were three generations in that house?

Uh-huh.

You all lived in the same house?

We all lived in the same house. My grandmother and my grandfather, my mom and my dad, and my sister and brother and I.

As you can recollect, tell me what it was like: What did the reservation look like? about how many were there? Tell me as much as you can remember.

Oh, gosh, I don't have any idea what the population was. It was *small*.

Did it seem like a lot of kids? or a few?

Well, it's a ranching [area], so it's spread out. And you know they all have their own little piece of property.

In other words, the Indians were ranching?

Uh-huh, and farming.

And farming. And what were their crops?

Oh, dear, I don't know. They raised a lot of cattle.

And this was their reservation, so they were a prosperous reservation?

Yeah, and it's a pretty little place. It's right on the river.

Now how far is that from Battle Mountain?

Oh, let's see, it's about 160-170 miles.

What county is that in?

Elko.

Tell me about school on the reservation.

Oh school was just like any other school. You had first and second together, third and fourth, or whatever—but they were mixed. Had one teacher to the classroom. Right across from our house was the church, which was the only church at that time. Now I think they have some different denominations, but at that time there was only one church, so everybody attended the same church.

At that time were the Indians all christianized?

Uh-huh, most of them. I remember church was big, well attended.

Was there a missionary system to missionize the Indians into Christianity?

I don't know, we had a regular...I was going to say, I think we called him "Father,"

but I'm not sure about that. But there was a priest and his family lived there.

And who were the teachers?

Oh, you mean by name?

No, who came to teach? Were they from the church? were they from the government?

I guess the government probably hired them. But they were white. I remember there was a Miss Drown. And I don't know how many there were. I can't remember for sure.

How many children in the classroom, about? do you remember?

No, I don't.

So when you were nine, where did your family go?

Elko. Moved to Elko.

From the Indian reservation into Elko?

Uh-huh.

What moved them into Elko?

Well, my grandmother passed away, and so my grandfather wanted to sell the store. So they sold and we moved to Elko. My dad drove a truck. We only lived in Elko for about a year-and-a-half, and then came to Battle Mountain.

Did your grandfather come to Battle Mountain too?

No, he went to Idaho.

To other family members?

Uh-huh.

And what brought your dad and family to Battle Mountain?

He transferred with the trucking company. It was called Wells-Fargo Trucking. And he transferred to Battle Mountain with them.

And how old were you then?

Oh, I must have been between ten and eleven, I guess.

And tell me, from your earliest recollections, what it was like here in Battle Mountain when you moved here.

It was much smaller. Everybody knew everybody, and I was the outsider, so when I started school that year, they treated me badly.

Oh, you were an outsider for a while.

Yeah, I was an outsider, but it didn't last very long. We had the same kind of a school...Like when I started school I was in the fifth grade, and so the classroom was the fifth and sixth grade.

Was that in where the courthouse is now?

That's where the courthouse is now, uh-huh.

How far away did you live from the school?

Oh, about two blocks.

Did your family rent a house when you first came?

Uh-huh, we lived right next door to the Episcopal church in a little house. At that time we didn't have indoor plumbing.

Oh, dear! Was that a new experience?

Yeah, it was!

How did your mother feel about the move?

Oh, well, she's fine, she would have gone anywhere.

Anywhere with him.

Uh-huh.

Now, tell me...Visualize the town. Do you have any recollections of what impressed you and what you didn't like, and something about what the town was like then, because it's changed so much.

Well, even at that time, it was a lot smaller than Elko. Battle Mountain is not very impressive when you first see it, so I wasn't too happy to be here, because I liked Elko. I really did like Elko. My other grandparents were in Elko, too.

And that was a little traumatic?

Yeah, I didn't want to leave them. But like I say, it was really small. Of course the streets weren't paved, and it was dusty.

Now what year was that? Late thirties?

No, no, that was in 1943 or 1944.

That late, and it wasn't paved!? No one's mentioned that.

No, it wasn't.

So it was kind of dusty?

Uh-huh.

Were there a lot of automobiles by then?

Oh yeah.

Did the train come through frequently?

Uh-huh.

There was a lot of train travel then?

Uh-huh.

Did I understand that there used to be a train depot here at Battle Mountain?

Uh-huh, there was.

Tell me about it.

Well, it was a pretty good-sized depot at that time. And we had a lot of train traffic. And I can remember when the troop trains came through.

Oh, during the war [World War II]?

Uh-huh, during the war.

Oh!

Everybody used to go down and wave to the soldiers and sailors. It was a pretty big deal at that time.

Why did they take the depot away?

It's only been gone for a few years. They just tore it down, gosh, three or four years ago. The town couldn't afford the upkeep. It had been closed for, gosh, it probably had been closed for maybe...I'm not even sure. But it had been closed for some time. The railroad just decided that if the town took

it—which we *really* talked about, discussed, for a museum—we had to move it. And there was no way it could be moved.

No money for that. Did taking away the depot affect the town dramatically?

No, because it had already been closed.

People were not using the train the way they used to?

No. But yeah, it was a busy depot back then.

Is the freight train used a lot here? Do the freight trains stop anywhere near here?

No. The trains that stop are the ones that pick up the ore cars, like the barite.

And they stop at the mines?

No, they stop in town. It's trucked to town. I don't know if you've ever noticed, but across from Western Market, out that way, there's piles.

Oh, yeah.

You can just about tell, at about eight or nine in the evening, every evening, you hear a big "bump," and you know that they're shipping ore. It's not *every* evening, but when they do, why you know somebody's shipping. And that's barite. Of course they don't ship out the gold ore—this is just barite right now.

Now I want to bring you back to when you came to Battle Mountain and your father was with the Wells-Fargo Trucking. Tell me about your father's work and how long he stayed with that trucking company.

Well, when we first moved here, I'm not sure what the haul was. I mean, he'd go to like Elko and Reno. They had a "haul" and then a "back haul." The back haul, of course, was groceries and supplies and stuff for town. But I'm not sure what he hauled out at that time. But before they started shipping their ore on railroads, they used to haul the ore.

How did they haul it?

On the truck. But he joined the Army in 1945. [pauses to think] In 1945?

During World War II? Did he go in the war late?

Yeah, because it was late. I'm not sure, maybe it was 1944. But he never did have to go overseas or anything. He was in California.

How did your family manage while he was away?

My mom went to work as a waitress downtown. We managed fine.

Your expenses were low?

I imagine, yeah.

What was Battle Mountain like during the war? Did you see changes as young men went to war?

I remember when a few people went to war. And I remember when some of them came home. And of course at that time I wasn't too well acquainted, but I remember when some of them going away, like friends of mine, their older brothers or friends, whatever. I remember shortages, rationing, and that time was tight.

Because of the shortage of tires and gasoline, did it stop the travelers coming into Battle Mountain? Because this was a stop along the long route of 80 going east. Do you remember if it slowed down people coming through?

I don't remember. But I remember the restaurants, they were busy. They used to call it the "tourist trade" in the summertime. Just seemed like there was quite a bit of travel. But, you know, I'm sure it did slow it down, some.

So let's get back to your family. How long was your father away in the Service, from the family?

I think he was gone for two years.

That long?! That must have been hard for your mother to handle that.

It was, it was hard on her. It was hard for Mom. And then when he came back, he went back to driving truck for the same company. Then in 1947, I think, he went to work for...Oh, I don't remember the name of the company. It had been Anaconda, that had the copper mine at Copper Canyon, out where Battle Mountain Gold is now. He went to work out there, and so we moved out there.

Now, a lot of questions: What was his work there at Copper Canyon?

I'm not sure where he started. But I remember when he worked in the mill. Then the job that he ultimately ended up doing was running the hoist.

Now how far is that from Battle Mountain?

Oh, gosh, about eighteen miles.

And what did your family live in?

We had a house. Well, when we first moved out there, we had to live *way* up the canyon. Gee, *way* up. I think it was maybe two- and-a-half miles. It was called the Old Nevada Mine, which was an abandoned mine, but there were a couple of houses there. And then we lived there for, oh, maybe four or five months—we didn't live there too long. And then a vacancy occurred farther down the canyon, so we got that. And it still wasn't in the main camp—it was still up the canyon a ways—so we had to walk probably three-quarters of a mile or a mile to catch the school bus.

How old were you when you went to Copper Canyon to the copper mines?

I must have been about twelve or thirteen.

How did you feel, getting settled-in at Battle Mountain and then moving out to a mining camp?

Well, I didn't mind because I had spent a lot of time out there with my friends anyway.

How did you meet friends?

Let's see, we met in school, and I got to be friends with several people that lived out there.

I see, they would come in, or stay at Battle Mountain.

And so we took turns. If we had something to do in Battle Mountain for the weekend, why then they'd stay in town with me. If we didn't,

then I'd spend the weekend out there with them. So I had spent a lot of time with them.

Did you have people in Battle Mountain that you could stay with, the way they stayed with you if anything was going on?

Yeah. Well, about the time I moved out there, most of them moved to town.

Oh, how interesting! So kind of fun, you could get away from your family and be with friends. Now, by then, you were in high school, So how did you get to school?

Bus.

They bused you in and bused you home?

Uh-huh.

Tell me about how many families lived out at the mine when you were there.

Oh, gosh!

Just approximate. Ten? Twenty?

Probably [pause] thirty,

Did your mother like it?

Uh-huh, she went to work in the office at the mine and she liked it.

Now how many were home then?

My brother and my sister and myself—all of us were home.

Tell me what it looked like and what life was like when you weren't going to school.

Oh, it was a fun place to live. I wish my children and grandchildren could have that experience, because it was just a big family. Of course we all had our chores on Saturday, like my sister and I had to do the washing—because my mother worked—and most of the other kids did too. And then we went hiking and walking and picnicking. It was like right *in* a canyon, and over the hill was another canyon, but it had a swimming hole in it. So in the summer we'd hurry and finish our chores and then walk. And it must have been, oh, seven or eight miles around to the swimming hole.

How many kids would there be?

Oh, gosh, like I say, my friends from town would spend a lot of time out with me. There were probably twenty kids.

Wow! Boys and girls?

Yeah, school age.

Did you have little romances in those days?

Oh, sure! That's where I met my husband!

Oh! What was he doing there?

He was my best friend's brother. So when I used to go out and stay with her, before I moved out there, why, gosh I just had an awful crush on him! [laughs]

So when you moved there, he was still living there?

Yeah, they lived out there for about another year I guess, and then they moved to town. Maybe it wasn't even that long. Maybe it was only like eight months or something,

and then they all moved to town, like my two friends, my best friends. Then eventually we just ended up getting married.

Well you knew each other a long time.

Yeah, we did.

That's interesting. Now tell me a little more about life out there. How was it like in the cold winters?

Well, in the cold winters we used to...The mine was way up on the hill and had this long, twisty road that went out into the "flat," we called it. They used to close that off for us so we could sled. They stopped the ore trucks and everything, like on a Saturday afternoon, and nobody could use the road because they'd let us go sledding. And of course we had home-made sleds and toboggans. And then at Christmastime they had a big Christmas party and the companies at that time gave these parties for the whole camp, and bought Christmas presents for everybody, had a Santa Claus, you know, and the stockings and candy. And it was a fun time. In the camp everybody knew when everybody's birthday was, so every, oh, maybe two to three weeks, we'd have a birthday party for whoever happened to have birthdays at that time—you know, like in the last couple of weeks. Everybody would go over for this birthday party and we'd do swimming and play games.

Was that for the kids?

Uh-huh.

What age group of kids? What was the range?

Everybody went. The whole camp would go to this birthday party.

Who kept up the birth dates?

I don't know, it's just kind of like a family: you knew when everybody's birthday was, and so it was a really fun place to grow up.

Now what about if somebody got sick? Was there any doctor out there?

No.

What did you do?

Brought them to town—there was a doctor here in Battle Mountain.

How long did it take to get from there to Battle Mountain?

Oh, gosh! It was a dirt road at that time. It must have taken like an hour or so, I would say. I don't really know. But I can remember like somebody would get hurt and they'd like load them in the back of a pickup truck, and somebody would ride with them to keep them... . And they'd get them to town.

Did women have their babies in Battle Mountain?

Uh-huh.

They'd come in?

Uh-huh.

Did you come into town to get the supplies?

Oh, yes.

What was cooking like? What were meals like?

They were just ordinary home-cooked meals.

Did you have refrigeration and electricity and everything?

Oh, yeah. We usually came to town on weekends and picked up groceries. We didn't always come, but somebody would come. And then there was like the "commissary" they called it.

The camp store?

Uh-huh. Well, there was the boarding house and the bunk houses for the single men. They kept bread and eggs and milk and those kind of things there.

Tell me about the people who worked there. Did some families come? or mostly single men?

Oh, it was a combination. There were a lot of families.

Where did they come from?

Well, my husband's family came from California. He had worked at—I'm not sure what the mine was, if it was copper, too, or not—but it was Walker Mine, California. It was way up in the hills above Quincy. That's where he was born. And when it closed down, they moved to Utah, because that's where his family was from—my father-in-law. And then when the copper boom hit here, they came to Nevada, and ended up at Copper Canyon. So a lot of the families came from another mine.

They'd hear about wherever there was work?

Uh-huh. Like from Idaho and Utah and California and Nevada.

Were there different ethnic groups in the workers? Like Mexicans or Indians?

No. There were a few Indians, because, of course we've got a colony here. But...No. Now, at that time...I don't know, there wasn't as much emphasis on ethnic as there is now, so, you know, they could have been...We could have all kinds of...Like Irish and...

Well, I mean...If they spoke Spanish. Like I noticed in town, there are Spanish-speaking people—a Mexican population.

We have a lot now.

And so that's what I mean, people who came from other countries to come up, like from Mexico. Where did the Mexican people who live here come from? What brought them here?

The ones that are here now? They came with the mines, but later.

I see, a later immigration. Then I wanted to find out; You lived out there at the mine. How long did your family live there?

Well I lived there until I got married.

What year did you get married?

In 1950.

And then where did you move?

To Battle Mountain.

And then what about the rest of your family? How long did they live there at the mine?

Well my sister got married the same year, a month before I did, and my brother was still in school. But my folks moved to town.

Did things slow up at the mine?

Uh-huh.

Did it close?

Yeah, it eventually closed.

And what did your father do then?

He went to Tempiute.

And what is that?

That was a mine, but I'm not sure what it was, what kind of mine it was.

Where is it?

It's down south of Tonopah.

Did they go to live there?

Uh-huh. They moved there. They ended up in Tonopah. My mothers still in Tonopah.

Oh, is that right? How big a town is that?

Tonopah? Oh, it's a little bigger than Battle Mountain, but not much.

About how many miles from Battle Mountain?

It's two hundred miles.

In what direction?

South, toward Las Vegas.

Is your father still living?

No.

When did he die?

Oh, gosh, let's see, he's been dead twenty years.

What happened?

He just was ill.

So your mother was probably working in Tonopah?

Yeah, she always worked. She was a deputy assessor in Nye County. And when she retired, she'd worked there for... I think it was twenty-two years.

Smart mother!

Yeah, real smart.

So she built her life there at Tonopah?

Uh-huh.

She never remarried?

No. She spends a lot of time in Battle Mountain.

Oh, so you see her a lot?

Yeah.

So let's get back to you and your husband now: Tell me more about your life together.

Well, we were young.

How old were you when you married?

Seventeen.

Ooo! Did you get your parents approval?

No, I didn't. [chuckles]

That was very young!

Yeah, it was very young.

How old was your husband?

He was eighteen.

Ooo [chuckles]

Yeah, now when you look back on it, you just...Oh, golly!

... if your kids did that! How did you manage?

He went to work. And of course he had graduated from high school. Let's see, at that time I think he was working for Natomas, which was a gold dredge. There's a Natomas, California, I think, where they had a gold dredge. The company came up here to dredge. They dredged the tailings from the copper mine, for the gold. He worked out there and he tended bar at night.

Where did you live?

In Battle Mountain.

In what [kind of house]?

His parents, when they moved from Copper Canyon into town, they had moved because they had bought—it was like a motel and a gas station. They called it a “campground” at that time, because it was cabins. We lived in one of those cabins, which was two rooms, no plumbing. The bathroom,

the washroom, and everything was out in the center of this campground. And that's where we lived.

What did you do?

I took care of my kids.

No, before you had kids. You were seventeen.

And I had kids!

Right away?

Yes, my oldest daughter was born when I was eighteen. As a matter of fact, I was seventeen when I got married., and in 1951 my daughter was born in March, and I graduated from high school in May.

Oh, what did they think in those days?

Well, I was married, so it was "proper," and so they let me go to school. At my graduation they made a big deal of how I finished school with the baby and everything. So we lived in this little two-room...

With the baby too?

With the baby. And then a year-and-a-half later we were still living there and had *another* baby.

How did your husband handle all this?

He worked two jobs. And then we finally rented a house.

Was he moving along in his work?

Well, he continued to be a miner, and tended bar in the evenings. He never did get to

go back to school, which we've always regretted. And then eventually he and a friend of his went into the mining business themselves.

What year was that? When did they do that?

Oh, let's see, when did they start? They must have started their business oh, around 1962 or 1963. And of course we were just a little outfit. There were three partners: he and two friends. And they mined barite. It was like with a pick and a shovel and a jackhammer. And then we finally made enough money so they could buy a loader. And then they had trucks and got a little equipment. We did alright.

Did you have more children?

Then I had a son. They were all born within...well, 1951, 1953, and 1954.

Oh, so you were a very busy mama.

Yes, I was. But they did well in their mining. Then we built us a house.

Oh, where was that?

It's in Battle Mountain. It's where we still live. That was in 1965 that we built our home.

And tell me some things about the changes in Battle Mountain during the time that you lived here. Sometimes you live in a place and it's so gradual you don't observe it.

Don't realize it. Well, of course, like I say, when we came here, the streets weren't paved. I can't remember what year they finally paved the streets and widened them. The business district is about the same, except now they're spread out more.

What happened when 80 moved the main highway away from downtown Battle Mountain?

It made a big difference in the business downtown.

Did any close? Was there a little down in the economy?

I think, yeah, there were a couple of gas stations that closed. It was kind of a big adjustment, because the tourist trade had been a...I worked as a waitress for *years*.

In which restaurant?

In the Nevada Hotel. As soon as my son started school, then I went to work. We had a big tourist trade at that time in the summertime. And it was a lot of traffic through. Oh, I loved it!

Seeing all the people?

All the people, uh-huh. You know, they had such different ideas about...I mean, when you said something about an Indian or something, why, they expected an Indian with a headdress and bow and arrow. And they were always surprised that it was so pretty—the mountains and stuff. They always thought of Nevada as just desert. Anyway, I really did love waiting table. I'd still be doing it if...But you can't do that too many years. I mean, that's hard work!

Yes, yes. When did you start this job at Battle Mountain Junior High School?

This job? I've been here seven, going on my eighth, year.

Do you get off in the summer?

Well, I get a month off.

Now tell me about your family, about your children?

I have my three children, and my son lives in Reno. My two daughters live here. One of them is divorced and right now she's living with me—she and her daughter.

How old is her daughter?

She'll be sixteen.

Does your daughter work?

Uh-huh.

Where does she work?

She's working at the Owl Club right now. My other daughter lives here. She's not employed right now. She's taking some courses through the community college.

How old is she?

Oh, my goodness. Now this is what I don't like to talk about, is how old my kids are! She's forty-two.

Did she ever marry?

Uh-huh.

Is she married now?

Uh-huh.

They both live here?

Both my daughters. I have ten grandchildren.

Who gave you the ten grandchildren?

One daughter has four girls, and my other daughter has three girls, and my son has two girls and one boy.

Oh, you finally got a boy!

One boy.

Big families! I'm always curious, in a town like Battle Mountain, how many of the family come back or stay here, which is very interesting.

Well the one daughter has lived in Montana and Washington.

What does her husband do, the one whose husband is here?

He works at the Marigold Mine.

Oh, okay, the mining. And what does your son do?

He's an electrician, contractor in Reno.

So you're all close to each other.

Yeah.

When the county seat was moved here from Austin—and I understand from reading newspaper clippings there was quite a battle, especially Austin wasn't so happy about it—what was it like in Battle Mountain when this was all going on? and what changes did you see?

Well, it was a fifty-year baffle. I mean, every ten years for fifty years this subject came up, and there was a lot of discussion and heated arguments, because there were family members in Austin that had family members

in Battle Mountain. Sometimes they wouldn't speak to each other during this period. Then finally, just before it was moved, and I can't even remember what year it was...

It was in 1980, I believe.

That's about right...it went on the ballot. They had a petition—I don't know who got the petition up—but they decided to settle it one way or another, get a petition and get it on the ballot, and then settle it. Well, it passed, which is unusual, because usually when we have an issue on the ballot and it's for Battle Mountain, Austin can defeat it.

With so much less population, they still can defeat it?!

Because Austin sticks together and they go out 100 percent.

Oh, here a lot of people wouldn't be voting.

Uh-huh.

What did you see happening here as the county seat was changing? I'm sure it changed a lot in this city.

I don't think it changed so much in Battle Mountain, because the county seat being in Austin, there were branch offices in Battle Mountain.

Oh, I didn't know that! I see. Were you already using the old school as a county building before that?

Yeah, I think they'd already started that.

Oh, I didn't realize that. So it was a gradual process.

Uh-huh, but it hurt Austin. I always thought that the county seat should remain in Austin, because that was Austin's livelihood.

Except, from what people said, every little thing, more people here would have to go down there.

Uh-huh, it was inconvenient. But like I say, they had a lot of branch office there was a branch assessors office, treasurer's office.

Is there still bitter feeling?

Oh, yes.

There is? So when I go to do interviews in Austin, I'll probably sense that?

I'm sure you will! Especially the old-timers.

Well, that's part of the history of the county.

Oh yes, that's a big, big.

Have there been any dramatic events—either natural or not natural—that have affected this area?

Well, I guess like mining booms that have come and gone. Like I say, when I was growing up, it was copper. And then the copper kind of fizzled out and we had a bust and things were quiet for a while. And then in the seventies we had the barite. So the population went up and a lot of things changed.

Now there's a rejuvenation of the gold mining, with the new systems. How have you seen the city change with that?

Oh, it's grown.

A lot of new people coming in?

A lot of new people. And just like with the school: when I first came to work for the school I was an aide with the special education class. I'm not sure what the school population was at that time. This is just the junior high: sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. And I did that for two years, and then the secretary left and I applied for a job and I got *her* job, so this is my fifth year as secretary. The second year I was secretary, we had—or was it the first year?—like a 300 percent increase.

Really?! So these are families coming in with children.

Uh-huh.

Was there enough housing for all of these people?

Well, the biggest one was the Echo Bay Mine, and they put in their own housing—trailers.

Oh, okay, mobile homes?

Uh-huh. And they have two areas: the first one is right in town, over here. And I don't know how many houses they put in, but what they do is, buy the lots and...

I see, so the mines supply the housing for the workers?

Well, *that* one does. And then of course we've had Battle Mountain Gold, which *was* Duval, and it was copper. That was Copper Canyon. The bottom fell out of copper quite some time ago, but there's always been—they've mined it a little. And then in the seventies there was another boom, and this

Duval Corporation came in from Arizona, and they brought a lot of people with them. And then the price of copper wasn't enough to support them. A side product of copper is gold. And it was the gold that was supporting them, so they ultimately switched to gold production.

A lot of the people that came in, is there enough work that they're still here?

Uh-huh.

And how long is that, about ten years?

Well, it's probably six, the big boom. But booms come gradually, like the Battle Mountain Gold, when they switched from copper to gold, and then the price of gold went way up and they've learned all this new technology. They have a mine here and a mine there, and pretty soon they're hiring. We have children that their parents work at the Echo Bay Mine and the Lonetree Mine—the one between here and Winnemucca that's right on the road—and the Marigold Mine, and the Chimney Creek: they're all big gold companies.

So your children here in the schools have been here without a lot of interruption. In other words, they've been here for a while.

Yeah, most of them stay for quite a while.

Do these families integrate into the Battle Mountain civic life and population?

Uh-huh.

So it isn't like they just live on the fringes as if they're going to leave the next year?

No, they usually have a pretty good idea of what the life of the mine is going to be.

They settle in?

They settle in pretty good.

Do some buy homes?

Oh yeah, some of them buy homes. The transient—I hate that word—but the ones that...

The single men who move around?

...that move around are the construction people. You know, the people that come in and build...

And then leave?

...and then leave. And then if they add on, they have another group that comes in.

Some of those are part-time, right? Where they come and go to supervise?

Well, no, most of those are pretty steady: the foremen-type people and the mill people. Now the miners, they kind of are travelers.

What do you foresee for the future of Battle Mountain in the mining and its economy?

Well, right now it's kind of "iffy," because they've introduced several bills into the Legislature that...People in the East are really anti-mining. They have this perception of the mining people as just "rape and ruin." They don't realize how much money that the...Well, they have to pay permits and they pay a royalty. They pay net proceeds. All that

goes to education. So they're really after the mining industry. If the price of gold stays up high—and it did just go up a little bit—why, we should be alright. Well, they were going to introduce a 12.5 percent...What did they call it? Royalty, on the mining companies. Anyway, that would...

Would hurt it.

Oh, really, really bad. And the scary part is, there's a lot of minerals in South Africa and Russia.

Oh, the competition now that might open up with the free trade, that might hurt.

Yeah.

Didn't that happen with the barite, were China was shipping-in cheaper?

Yeah, they could hand-pick their barite and ship it to the Gulf coast cheaper than we could produce it from here, because I worked for a barite mine for ten years until it closed down.

Oh, my goodness! Well let's hope that the free trade will watch out for things like that.

But, you know, there's all kinds of minerals in Russia, and they're just *begging* us to come over there and mine, so it would be a good investment—especially if it gets too expensive in this country. Right now it's really on the edge. We've just got to wait and see what happens.

Anything more about the schools that might be unusual or different from other towns? I don't know anything about your schools.

Well, I don't know what would be different about them.

Are the schools here good? do they get good support from your county and state? Like we have trouble in California, which doesn't have a lot of support.

Uh-huh. I think we're going to have a really big budget cut this year, because there just is no way around it. You know, there's a lot of room for it.

Did a lot of these schools grow up in this one region when these new people came in and you needed more space for them?

Uh-huh. Now, I don't know if you noticed or not, but all these modular classrooms we had to move.

I saw this whole confusing complex! where all the schools are in one area.

Yeah, all the schools—even the high school is going to have to have two next year. And the high school is only...Oh, gosh, how old is it? Five or six years old.

Oh my!

And they've already outgrown it. And there's a couple of mines, another big gold mine that's supposed to start up out here this year. But I think it's kind of on hold right now, to wait and see what's going to happen.

Well when they come in and bring so many people, do they help contribute to the schools?

Sometimes they do. Like the Echo Bay Mine, it gave the school \$100,000 when we

had to put in all the modulars, so that bought part of them.

One of many things that impresses me about Battle Mountain—because when I came, I didn't even know about it—is the wonderful feeling of safety, because I've gone to so many homes where doors are unlocked, cars are unlocked. Two things I observed, and then tell me what you think: Number one is that maybe because I-80 doesn't come into the town, it's a little bit isolated from a lot of other people coming in—strangers, and also it seems everyone can find a job. You don't have homeless...

No, we don't.

...everyone seems to have a home. Is that a correct analysis?

Uh-huh.

And also the sheriffs who are here and ride around. It gives a feeling of safety.

Uh-huh, that's true. And then it's still small enough...It's not as small as it *used* to be, of course, when everybody knew everybody. But if you see somebody strange at your neighbor's, you're going to check it out or something. So it's pretty nice that way. In years past, we had a lot of hitchhikers and the railroad "bums" we called them, the hoboes. We had a lot of those in the summertime. They'd come by your house and you'd give them a sandwich.

Oh, I see. But you don't have that now?

No, we don't have that any more. Well, it's against the law to ride the rails. But yeah, we used to have a lot of that.

Is there anything else about Battle Mountain that I haven't asked, or you haven't discussed that you might want to tell me about before we end the interview?

You were talking about the ethnic people at the mining camp. There weren't any *there*, but we always had a Mexican family, and the Indians, of course, but I grew up with...We had some Mexicans. Their parents worked on the railroad—not at the mines, but on the railroad.

Do you know where they came from, what part of Mexico?

No, I don't, not exactly. But the ones I'm thinking of are kids that I grew up with. And their parents came from Mexico. And of course I don't think at that time they had to have green cards and all that kind of stuff.

A lot of them stayed?

Oh yeah.

Where do they work?

Well, let's see, one of the girls that I grew up with works at the bank, and another one—her sister—works out at Echo Bay.

So they're fully integrated, there's no discrimination like other places?

No.

Is there anything else that you want to tell me before we end this interview?

Gee, I really can't think of anything right off hand. I'm sure I will think of "Oh, I should

have told her that, and I should have told her that.

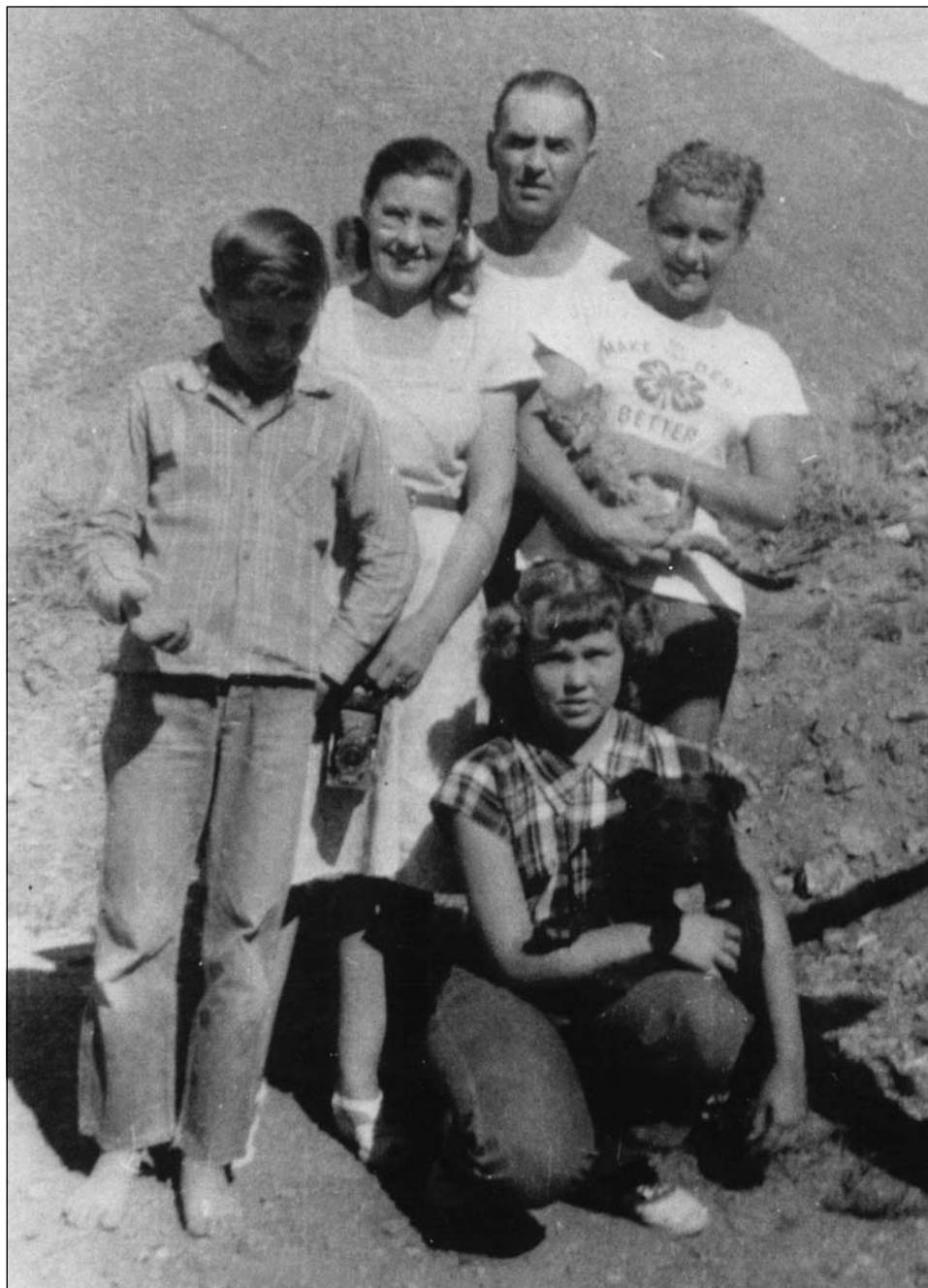
Well, if you do think of some, I'll be returning, and you leave a message for me and we'll add it to this tape. This is the end of the interview. I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for sharing your information and knowledge and experiences with us. Thank you.

COXIE ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



COXIE ROBERTS, 1992



Cox family, 1946, Copper Canyon, Nevada. Eldred, father; Avis, mother; Marion, sister; Chuck, brother; Coxie (kneeling).

(Original photograph owned by Coxie Roberts)

COXIE ROBERTS

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Cecilia May Cox Roberts
(Coxie Roberts)

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GRACE BLOSSOM ALTENBURG ROSE**PREFACE**

Grace Blossom Altenburg Rose was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada in 1908. She is a charming, youthful woman of 85, with an amazing memory. Grace's paternal grandfather, John Ansel Blossom, born in Ohio, settled in Battle Mountain in 1869, where he built the first house. In 1879 he contracted to grade the Nevada Central Railroad from Battle Mountain to Austin. Blossom Springs, near the present golf course, was developed for corralling and watering his horses.

Her maternal grandfather was August Desire Lemaire from Calais, France. He came with his wife and three sons to Battle Mountain in 1876, and established the Lemaire Store and adjoining living quarters. Grace's mother, Adele Marie and Grace were born there. Grace has vivid memories of her grandfather, since she lived in the same house with him until she was ten, when he died. Grace did not know her maternal grandmother, a talented artist, who died before Grace was born.

Grace's mother was the only female in the family, with four older brothers. She was the custodian of the family treasures which included her mother's art work, needlework, and family photographs. These are now owned by Grace Rose and her daughter Gail.

When she was twenty-two, Rose married Frederick Weaver Altenburg, a young man she knew all her life. His parents owned and managed the Nevada Hotel and the newlyweds lived with them. Rose describes carefree summers at the Altenburg camp on the Humboldt River, frequently joined by as many as twenty relatives and friends who came to eat and swim with them.

Her husband died all too young in his plane in 1938, leaving a young widow with two children. Rose worked in the Nevada Hotel's ice cream parlor, which was established because of Prohibition, and also helped Mrs. Altenburg take care of the books. A trained nurse, she later became Matron of the Lander County Hospital, leaving that position when she married Dale Rose in 1943. She and Dale, who was also born in Battle Mountain, went

through school together. Dale's work with the Highway Department took them first to Carson City, and when a new division was created in Winnemucca in 1960, he was made District Engineer and they have been residents of that city ever since. They stayed close to friends and family in Battle Mountain, visiting the Altenburg and Lemaire families frequently.

INTERVIEW

This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Grace Blossom Altenburg Rose at her home, at 170 E. Minor, Winnemucca, Nevada, June 11, 1993.

Sylvia Arden: Good morning, Grace. I'm so happy to be here interviewing you this morning. Would you please give us your full name?

Grace Rose: My name is Grace Blossom Altenburg Rose.

And where were you born?

I was born in Battle Mountain, Nevada

What was the date?

March 7, 1908.

I know that you were born after your paternal grandfather died, but tell me his name and just a little bit about him that your parents might have told you.

Well, my grandfather's name was John Ansel Blossom. He was born in Miamisburg, Ohio, in 1836.

When did he come to Nevada?

I think he came in the early 1860s, because of the Gold Rush.

Did he get into the gold mining?

Yes, he did some gold mining over in Star City—probably where he met his wife. Then he came to Winnemucca. He was a harnessmaker and had a livery stable here in Winnemucca in the early days.

Oh, how interesting!

But I think mining is what brought him to this part of the country.

Sounds like he had a lot of interests and a lot of entrepreneurship to start so much.

That's right, I think so.

Now, when did he meet your paternal grandmother, and where?

Well, I think he met her in Star City. In those days it was quite a large community. There's nothing there now—some remnants, foundations, of the old mining days.

Do you know much about your grandma?

Well, not too much. I just know that her name was Elvira Hunter when she married my grandfather in 1866 at Star City. They lived most of their lives in Battle Mountain.

Now, tell me about your maternal grandfather. That was Grandfather Lemaire.

That was Auguste Desiré Lemaire. He was born in Calais, France, February 6, 1839. I know that he came to this country when he was only nineteen.

And what brought him here?

The adventure, the Gold Rush, I think. I can't exactly say. He was very young, and he went to North Bloomfield, California, and there's where he met his wife, Marie Louise Lucas. Her folks were from New Iberia, Louisiana. My grandmother was born [January 26,] 1852.

Did she ever tell you what brought her family out to California where they met?

It was in California, yes. I think North Bloomfield, California, because that was where they were mated.

We're going to go back to your grandparents later, but now I want to ask just very briefly: Tell me your father's full name.

My father's name was James Augustin Blossom. And he was born at Humboldt House, Nevada, April 26, 1881. His mother was on her way to San Francisco to have her child and had to get off the train. Humboldt House was an eating place for the train at that time.

Oh my! And there was no medical facility then?

No, but there was a hotel and restaurant that fed the passengers on the train. So on her stopover my father was born.

Oh, for goodness sakes! And tell me your mother's name and where she was born.

My mother's name was Adele Marie Lemaire. She was born in the Lemaire Store building in Battle Mountain. Her four brothers heard her cry when she was born.

Oh my! So she was the youngest, and a girl after four boys.

And the only daughter.

How did your mom and dad meet?

Well, I think they grew up together, were in school together, and as they grew older my mothers brothers were very strict with her dating, and they always accompanied her on dates. My father had been away to college at St. Mary's in Oakland, California, so when he came back he went into the ranching business.

In the Battle Mountain area?

In the Battle Mountain area, yes. It was quite a social event when my mother and father were married.

Well, before they married, did her brothers finally let her alone to date your father?

Yes, they were very protective of her, but finally...I think she married at an early age to be on her own. [chuckles]

Oh. Do you know how old she was when she married?

Well, she probably was eighteen years old.

So that was very young.

I think 1902. My arithmetic doesn't tell me lust what that is.

Did they tell you about the wedding?

I don't have any records of their wedding.

No newspaper clippings?

I think I do have a clipping, but it isn't available right now.

Where did they marry?

They married in Battle Mountain—I think probably in the Lemaire home.

And where did they live after they married?

Well, my father was in the ranching business, but we had a home on the northeast part of Battle Mountain, a brick building, that is still there, I think—has survived floods and many owners.

How many brothers and sisters? When did the children start coming?

Well, my mother lost her first child. He was stillborn. But my sister, Adele Louise, was born July 19, 1905. She was a beautiful woman who was a model in San Francisco.

Let's not move into her adulthood. I want to get you born now! Okay, so your sister was born and then you were born...

About three years later.

And did you all live in this first house?

No, because of the flood in Battle Mountain, I think that was the reason that we moved to the store building.

But before the flood, you and your mom and dad and sister lived in this first place?

Yes.

Do you have the address of that first place? Do you know the location?

No. I can't place the name of the street.

Then tell me about the flood and moving to the store.

Well, I think we moved by boat [laughs] from our house to the Lemaire Store. I have pictures, I think, of the flood in Battle Mountain. It covered the railroad tracks.

Who else was living at the store when you moved to the apartment over the store? Who else was living there then?

My grandfather was alone.

Oh, all the brothers were grown?

All the brothers were grown, married, and had their own homes and families.

I see. And so he was alone—in other words, your grandmother died?

Yes.

Tell me about that.

My grandmother was only forty-four years of age when she died—probably of a ruptured appendix. Because my mother was so young, her grandmother sent her away to San Rafael to the Dominican Sisters Convent. And so her years between twelve and sixteen were spent there.

I see. Now the boys were older, so they could take care of themselves?

Oh yes, they were older. They all lived at the Lemaire Store until they were old enough to marry.

And how did your grandfather handle his life when your grandmom died? Did they talk about that? Did he have someone help?

Yes. My grandmother was an artist and spent a lot of time painting and doing handwork. She was always busy, so they employed a Chinese cook, usually.

Oh, even before she died?

Oh yes!

Alright. Did she leave any paintings? Do you have any of her paintings?

Yes, I have a good many of her paintings. I have two flower pictures that were painted on velvet, and a dog picture that I have that I treasure because it's in a very old frame and people admire it when they come into my home.

I hope you'll show me those after the interview.

Yes, I will.

Okay, now you moved to the store. From your very, very earliest recollections, as a child there, first describe the physical living quarters, as you first remember them.

Well, our living quarters were downstairs: very large kitchen, dining room, and parlor. The parlor had many of my grandmother's paintings in them, and a beautiful bird's-eye [maple] piano that my mother treasured and taught music lessons on after she returned from San Rafael. Many of her paintings she shared with her brothers when we left Battle Mountain.

Now wait, whose paintings?

My grandmother.

Oh, your grandmother's paintings.

She did most of her paintings at the head of the stairs. There was a conservatory room that she kept all her plants and that had the right light for her painting. And it was private, so it didn't interfere with her childraising.

So she was given a lot of support for this art.

Yes, I would say she did have much support.

I'll bet you're sorry you never got to meet her.

My goodness, yes!

Now, was your mother then in charge of the household when you moved to the store? Was she then in charge of the cooking and taking care of everything?

Well, she took charge of managing the house and she helped her father in the store at times. And I think all of her brothers worked in the store also for a long period of time. Then they ventured out into their own businesses.

Let's go slowly to the brothers now. Can you tell me first the names of her brothers?

Yes, her oldest brother was Louis Aimé Lemaire, and the second brother was August Charles, then Henry Rene, and the youngest was Ernest Hubert.

Now, by the time you moved to the store, were all four working in the store?

Yes, I think at that time. When I was very young they were all working in the store.

Now, let's go to your earliest recollections of your life there by the store—a kind of a description, and then a typical day with all of these people around.

Well, the family were all very musical. My mother played the piano, and her four brothers were all talented. Her oldest brother, Louis, played the trumpet; her other brother August was a violinist. Henry played the clarinet, and Uncle Ernest played the cello.

Was this their mother's influence, to get them all into musical instruments? They had the talent, but someone needed to encourage it?

Well, I think that Mother was the one who encouraged all this, but they all enjoyed getting together, so they had their own orchestra and would gather together and have musical evenings.

Oh, how wonderful! And were you a quiet listener? or did you get involved? or tell me what the scene was like. What were you doing?

Well, I don't remember quite that much about it, but I don't know how to tell you [chuckles] this.

Were you there to appreciate and enjoy these musical evenings?

Some of the time, yes.

Or did they put you to sleep?

Well, I probably went to sleep, because I remember that when they had dances,

entertainment in the lodge hall upstairs over the store building, I usually ended up asleep on chairs.

Did they perform later as you were getting to be a young teenager so that you could dance too?

Well, yes. I think that *their* children were all musical, and they formed their orchestra for dances and entertainment too. So when I was a teenager, I was able to attend some of their dances.

Sounds like a very lively, talented family. That's an unusual environment. But the brothers were not living in the living quarters then?

No, they each had their own home and properties and businesses.

So there was a very large family and support group around all of you. What kind of holiday celebrations did you all have? or birthdays?

Well, we usually made a great deal of family gatherings at the Lemaire home in the parlor, because it would accommodate all the families, grandchildren—Grandfather Lemaire's grandchildren. So we would have family gatherings and entertainment, musical afterwards.

Now you say the "Lemaire home." Are you talking about the living quarters in the store?

That's right, the living quarters next to the store building. Well, *inside* the store building. You see, it's all one building.

I see. But there were large rooms.

Yes, very large.

Are there photographs of any of that, do you know?

I don't believe I have any of them.

Tell me a little bit about your Grandfather Lemaire while you were living there as a child. Can you remember him?

Yes, I remember him quite well, because I was ten years of age. I would go into the store building with him to check things out, sometimes after the store was closed.

Would he take your hand? Was he affectionate?

Yes, Grandfather was very affectionate. He was a very distinguished-looking man. He had gray hair and a long, gray beard—well, not too long! [chuckles] It was distinguished. He was a very gentle man, and generous I think. One time a lady came into the store and wanted to know if they had any black cats. And my grandfather said, "No, but our cat is expecting kittens any time, and if there is a black one, I will save it for you." So he was very accommodating to his customers.

How did he dress in the store?

Grandfather always had his dress coat and vest, and dress pants. So he always looked very distinguished.

Oh, I hope I can find a picture of him somewhere! I'd like to have that.

Yes, I have pictures of him.

How long did he work in the store?

Until his illness before he passed away in 1918. After his death, his sons carried on the business in the store, for many years.

And did you continue living in the quarters there at the store? Did your family continue living there?

My mother, sister, and I continued living at the store building until I graduated from high school.

You said your mother and your sister...

Sister Louise.

Had your father...

My father had passed away, the same year that my grandfather had passed away. So my mother, sister, and I lived there until I was seventeen years of age. And we decided to move to California to be with some of my mother's friends.

Okay, let's back up now. Let's take you through your school years, because since you were there in Battle Mountain until you were seventeen, I have a lot I want to ask you. Can you remember when you started elementary school?

I think my mother started me in school at a young age. I think I must have been five, because I was only seventeen when I graduated from high school. But I remember the early years: we were in this old, old frame school building where all the grades were housed. There was one teacher for at least three grades, sometimes four. Eliza Pierce was the first grade teacher through third and fourth grades. And we were attending school there until the brick building, now used by the Lander County Commissioners—the courthouse building.

The schoolhouse was where the current courthouse is? That same building?

Yes, that brick building became the elementary school *and* high school.

Oh, and high school too?

Yes, when it was first built, it had the high school.

Can you remember anything in elementary school? Anything specific about subjects that you started to get more interested in, or what a school day was like, what you liked about it?

[chuckles] Well, in those days, we had very little playground equipment, so most of our games were played in the street.

Oh, really?!

We played “Dare Base,” the boys played marbles, drew a big ring and played with marbles. Another favorite was “Kick the Can” and “Hide and Go Seek.”

That sounds like fun. What were the subjects that you took, do you remember?

No, I can’t remember.

That’s alright. Did you go home for lunch?

Oh yes, we had to go home for lunch, even if it was across the railroad tracks. Everyone had to go back. There was no such thing as hot lunches in those days.

And everyone lived close enough to walk home and go back?

Right.

During this period your uncles were running the store and was your mom running the household? Was she helping in the store too?

She was giving music lessons mostly. That was her vocation and she taught music lessons for a living when we lived at the store building.

Now getting into high school, tell me a little bit about your high school years. Did you start to have a social life?

The first two years of high school I attended Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden, Utah—my sister and I did.

Now wait, your mother sent you away from Battle Mountain?

Uh-huh, we attended the convent school.

You and your sister?

Yes, we both attended.

Did your mother know about that school? Or did she want you to get a special education?

Yes, she thought it would give us a little polish and finish that we couldn’t acquire in the Battle Mountain school.

Was she a sophisticated woman?

I would say so. She had been raised in the convent, so she thought that was the proper thing for her daughters.

What convent did she go to?

She went to Dominican in San Rafael.

Oh, that’s right.

My sister and I attended Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden, Utah, until she graduated from there in 1924. I graduated in 1925.

*Now, how old were you when you went there?
Were you starting high school?*

I was starting high school, yes.

So probably around fourteen?

Thirteen, fourteen.

*How did you feel about leaving your home and
going to a strange place?*

I was very homesick. In fact, I was so homesick my mother had to come and make a visit—by train, of course. She came to visit, and after seeing her, I was satisfied to go on to school until Christmastime, when we were able to go home for vacation. But being away from Battle Mountain was always very traumatic for me.

You had your sister there with you, right?

Yes.

*Tell me what your schooling there was like:
What were some of the things you studied?*

Well, I think music was one of the most important. We had wonderful teachers, very dedicated teachers. Our living at the convent was strict.

Was it all girls?

All girls, yes. And we would have walks on Saturdays or Sundays where we could enjoy being out.

Did you have to wear a uniform?

Yes, we had to wear a uniform. Our Sunday uniform was blue, and our daily schoolday uniform was black.

Do you have any pictures of that?

Yes, I have, in my old albums.

*I'd like to see that after. When you say "music,"
did you play an instrument?*

My sister and I both took piano lessons. My sister became a very accomplished musician. After her school years she became a teacher in high school.

Did you continue your love of music?

Yes, but I was never as accomplished as the rest of my family.

Did you study language?

Yes, we studied French, Of course, because that was our family background.

*When you lived with Grandpop, did he speak
French to you?*

Well, he would encourage it, but I was too young at that time to learn much French.

So how long did you go to the convent?

My freshman, sophomore, and senior year. My junior year I attended school in the Battle Mountain High School.

How did that happen?

Oh, I was too homesick. I think I wanted to be with my friends and playmates in Battle Mountain.

*So tell me about when you came back to Battle
Mountain: were there any changes in what
Battle Mountain was like?*

When I came back to Battle Mountain, that was after I was married.

You said you came back for your junior year from the convent to go to high school in Battle Mountain. So I want to talk about the junior year when you came back. You were a teenager. Do you remember anything about what Battle Mountain was like then?

Well, Battle Mountain was still quite a small town. There was ranching and mining interests, but nothing like the present day.

Was the train going through the main street?

Oh yes. The train has always gone through the main street.

Tell me a little bit about the train that went through Battle Mountain, and the depot.

Well, the Southern Pacific train went through Battle Mountain. It came from Ogden, Utah, and went directly to San Francisco. There were usually two or three passenger trains at that time. So that was the only other transportation, because there was no highway in those days.

Oh, there was no highway?!

No, the highway wasn't built until the early thirties.

So the train was the major means of transportation?

That's right.

And was the depot right in town? Would you get on the train right there in Battle Mountain?

Yes, the depot was directly in front of the Lemaire store, also the depot for the Nevada Central Railroad that ran from Battle Mountain to Austin.

Oh, so this was a lively center, with the trains coming and going. About how many times a day would the trains arrive and leave?

Well, I think the Southern Pacific trains were divided early morning and afternoon trains—usually to San Francisco or to Ogden, Utah, destinations.

That must have been convenient, hopping on the trains to San Francisco or Austin or Utah. Was that missed when it was stopped?

The Nevada Central was stopped in 1937. It made trips to Austin from Battle Mountain: one day to Austin, and back the next day, because it was a ninety-mile trip, and the Nevada Central speed was rather slow. You could hop off and jog a ways and get back on. [laughter]

Well, it was through mountains, right?

Yes, there were mountains.

So tell me, did you take that train to Austin?

I did at one time, and it was a memorable trip, because I was very young and my mother and I got off the train at Silver Creek to go and visit relatives that were living on a ranch out of Austin. The Watt family lived there at that time. That was my Uncle Henry's wife. He married Helen Watt. Grandma Watt was a very distinguished Scotswoman.

Oh, how interesting! When you were young, did your family go to the Humboldt River in

the summer to camp, the way Eleanor Lemaire told me her family did?

Yes, I have pictures of my grandparents and my mother and her four brothers on the river, picnicking and playing on the river when they were very young.

I want to see that! Can you remember those days?

That's before my time.

Oh, before your time. Ah, because it sounded like such wonderful summers.

We *did* use the river. We were only a mile from the Humboldt River, so we picnicked very frequently. We all learned to swim in the Humboldt River. Of course boating was another pleasure.

What kind of boats?

Oh, usually homemade boats.

What were some of the other recreation activities? Especially you were home one year in high school. Did they have dances in town, or movies?

Well, yes, we had dances. Of course movies too. But our movie house was not such as most people knew—it was just a large hall. Portable chairs could be set up for the movies and removed for dances. [laughter]

Was that a popular place in town for the young teenagers?

No, it was just popular for everyone. In the early days, dances were one of the only

pleasures that people all enjoyed. Another thing, they used to have masquerades. Masquerades were something that happened about once a year, and there was always a children's masquerade for the very young.

Was that Halloween?

Well, yes, I think mostly at Halloween time.

Tell me, did you start dating when you were here in your junior year?

Yes, my junior year I started dating the man I finally married.

Oh, and who was that?

That was Fred Weaver Altenburg.

So did you know him all through your childhood? or did you just know him later?

I knew him all his life. He and his sister were good friends of mine. It wasn't until my junior year that romance began.

Then how could you go back to the convent?! [laughs]

Well, that was difficult. [laughs] That was difficult. But after our high school years, he went on to college and I had moved to California.

Where did he go to college?

He went to University of Nevada [Reno]. Then he wanted to become an artist, so he attended Otis Art School.

Where is that?

Out of Los Angeles, I think. Then later on he went to art schools in Berkeley and San Francisco.

Was he a talented artist like your grandmother?

Yes, he was a talented artist.

Not related to your grandma, but another artist?

No, another artist in the family.

Isn't that interesting! After your senior year at the convent, where did you go to California with your family?

We moved to Glendale, California. We were there about nine months.

Was that relatives living in Glendale?

Just friends of my mothers. My sister worked in Los Angeles, so she had to take the train from Glendale to Los Angeles. I taught school for eight months.

Really?! In Glendale?

In Glendale.

What did you teach?

I taught second and third grades. I didn't have normal training as a teacher, but this was a parochial school and teachers were in demand, so they gave me the job, until I was old enough to go into nurses' training. That relieved me of my teaching experience.

Tell me about going into nurses' training.

I went into nurses' training in St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco with four other girls. At that time there was a demand for nurses, so they made an exception to their regular classes and took the five of us.

How old were you then?

Just eighteen.

Oh, a young girl! Was it something you really liked?

Yes, it had been a desire of mine all through all my life, I think. I probably had been influenced by the Red Cross nurses in World War I. I think that's what influenced me.

And how long were you in that nurses' training program?

I was in nurses' training until I graduated in November 1928.

How many years was that training?

Twenty-eight months in those days. That was considered qualification to be a registered nurse.

Did you keep in touch with your future husband? Did you see each other, communicate?

Yes, we kept in touch because of his attending art school and my nurses' training, we kept in touch until 1930, when he went back to Battle Mountain to help his father manage the hotel.

What hotel?

The Nevada Hotel in Battle Mountain. So June 22, 1930, I met him in Elko [laughs], and we were married.

Was it an elopement?

No, it wasn't an elopement, because my mother was very fond of my husband, and blessed the marriage.

Were you just alone, the two of you?

My cousin, Alice Lemaire, and a friend, Gnacio Belaustegui, was my husband's friend who stood up with him. And then Lou and Dan Shovelin were old friends that wanted to be with us for the special event. So we stayed in Elko overnight and went on to Battle Mountain. Our honeymoon [laughs] was spent in Austin, because my husband had been called on Grand Jury.

How old were you when you married?

I was twenty-two years old.

And how old was your husband?

Twenty-four.

Uh-huh, that's nice ages. So then where did you live in Battle Mountain when you started your married life?

We lived with his mother and father in the Altenburg home.

And where was that?

On Third Street.

What are the names of his parents?

Fred and Estella Altenburg. They managed and owned the Nevada Hotel. But it was his son...to help his father, because his father was in ailing health.

So now tell me, you lived with his parents, and tell me what your life was like—what did you do?

Well, the Altenburgs enjoyed camping on the river. We usually spent one month camping. We took a coal and wood stove, several big tents [chuckles] and we secured a fly over the kitchen. A fly is a canvas that was spread to create shade for the cooking area and eating area. We always had a long table with benches to accommodate our friends who came to eat with us and go swimming.

Now tell me, when you say "they went camping," whose land was this by the river? Was it just public land?

No, this belonged to the Filippini brothers. That was the ranch that extended from the T.S. to the Licking Ranch.

What's T.S.?

T.S. was the name of the ranch, the T.S. brand. And that extended to the Licking Ranch. That is, almost to the River Road. [laughs]

This is the Humboldt River?

The Humboldt River, yes.

Did other families camp there too?

Well, we had lots of guests, so...

In other words, it was the Altenburg family?

It was the Altenburg, and all their relatives. So we had "guest tents" for visiting relatives and friends.

How many people would be there?

Sometimes we'd have twenty people for dinner, and people would bring cakes and watermelons and casserole dishes to help.

It sounds like fun! Were there any toilet facilities?

No, there were no toilet facilities. We created our bathroom in sort of a dry ditch. We would have a box with a toilet seat for accommodation.

Would you just wash in the river?

Yes, we spent most of our time in the river swimming. We'd swim mornings and afternoons.

That sounds like fun! Would the men come after work, or go to work from there?

Yes, the men would come up for dinner after work.

And the women would have all the food ready?

Right.

Was that fun?

We had a wonderful time and spent a lot of time camping.

Were there a lot of kids there?

Yes, there were a lot of children. I think all the children learned to swim in the Humboldt River at an early age.

So your early years of marriage sound like they were kind of carefree.

Yes, then my husband decided to learn to fly and took up flying. That was in 1938 that he had the misfortune to have an accident in the hills south of Battle Mountain, known as the Copper Basin area. It's now developed by gold mining. Anyway...

You had children?

Yes, we had two children: a son, Frederick Giles Altenburg, and my little daughter was Gail Marie Altenburg, who was born prematurely in our home.

Oh, was she alright?

Yes, she was very delicate at birth, weighing only about four pounds. And without an incubator we fashioned an incubator out of the crib and the baby bathtub and a hot water bottle.

Oh, my gosh! What were the medical facilities in Battle Mountain when you were having your children?

Well, a home had been made into a hospital. There wasn't even indoor plumbing. The first hospital was run by a woman by the name of Lucretia Frame and Dr. Samuel Clark. It had been a four- or five-room home, and the plumbing facilities were outside. This woman had to carry water into the hospital. She did all the nursing care, cooking and everything in those days. So that's about sixty years ago. Anyway, then there was another home, a better home, brick home, that became the county hospital, and had all modern facilities.

Were your babies born in that hospital?

My son was born in Elko because being [chuckles] shortly out of nurses' training in San Francisco, I didn't approve of the Battle

Mountain Hospital, so I went to Elko to have my baby. Of course his sister was born in the Altenburg home.

Was that planned that way, to have her born in the home?

No, it was November 26, and the hospital was full of ill people with influenza.

In other words, because of the influenza, you didn't want to be in the hospital there.

That's right.

It must have been a tremendous asset that you had nurses' training.

Yes, it was. And then I had a friend who had nurses' training, by the name of Mary Shovelin, so she came and "specialed" our little baby because of her delicate condition, until I was able to be up and round and take care of her. The doctor was very much interested in my daughter because of being born at home and not having modern nursing facilities, a premature baby didn't have much chance of living in those days.

Did she have any bad results from any of that?

No, she grew up to be a very intelligent and beautiful lady.

Great! Now, I want you to go back and tell me as much as you can about the Altenburg family and the Nevada Hotel, which is such a historical part of Battle Mountain—whatever you can remember.

Well, I remember working. My first job was working in the soda fountain in the Nevada Hotel, before I went away to California to

live. I worked the summer vacation before we moved. Mr. Altenburg was a very wonderful proprietor of the Nevada Hotel. He and his wife managed and operated—they rented out the restaurant part of it—but in those days it was a meeting place for young people to come in and have ice cream, because it was the only social [chuckles] life they had.

Now, what part of the Nevada Club was that?

It was the part that—right now, that part of the building is the saloon. The restaurant had been the lobby for the hotel where they sold rooms. Then there was a bar in the back of the lobby. Since the Dorians have had the hotel, they have remodeled to make the restaurant a larger area.

So then when you were married, did you then later work at all at the hotel, or help?

Yes, I used to help out in the soda fountain. My sister-in-law, Gladys Fisher, also worked in the hotel.

Tell me, at that time, what it was like in that hotel. I mean, it was still a small town. Who were the people? Did transient miners or workers stay at that hotel?

Well, usually people were from out of town that stayed at the hotel. They were salesmen, travelling people. Very few people that worked in the mines or ranches stayed there. It was more for travelling people. The accommodations were very nice. When Prohibition was repealed, then they started the cocktail lounge, which became very popular, and the saloon part too.

So in other words, the ice cream parlor was there during Prohibition.

Yes. The ice cream parlor had been there—that was established more *because* of Prohibition.

I see. Was there gambling there all the time?

Oh yes, some, but not a great deal—not like there is in the present-day casinos. Nothing like that.

I've read a lot of things about Mrs. Altenburg and the Nevada Hotel. What was her role?

Well she helped manage the hotel with her husband until he wasn't able to take care of it any longer. He passed away in 1931, so her son managed with her full-time. It wasn't until 1938 that he took up flying. So after that, her son-in-law, Marion Fisher, took over managing for her.

And did she keep working there?

Well, yes, she kept working there until the war. Then Mr. Fisher had to go into the Service, so she leased the hotel then for a number of years.

Who did she lease it to, do you know?

She leased it to a man by the name of Pritchard. After the war, Mr. Fisher sold the hotel to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dorian. That was in 1959, I think. The Nevada Hotel was never known as a club. It had been the Nevada Hotel since 1872, and the Nevada Hotel was owned and operated by Altenburgs for eighty-seven years.

Wow! Then what happened with your life?

Well after my husband died, I helped Mrs. Altenburg take care of the books and do some

work at the hotel. Then in 1940, I was asked to be Matron of the Lander County Hospital.

Was this a new hospital?

No, this was an old hospital that was a brick building and formerly a home belonging to the Kattenhorns. Kattenhorn had been a miner and contractor—I think a builder. So when they moved away, Lander County bought their residence for a county hospital.

What year was that, do you know approximately?

No, I don't know. I *think* that it was in the 1920s. So I was the Matron of the hospital for two years.

How old were your children then?

They were about ten and twelve.

Alright, so they were in school all day.

They were in school, and under the care of their grandmother, Estella Altenburg, when I was busy, so they were well taken care of.

Was that a full-time job?

Yes, it was a twenty-four-hour job. We took care of many accidents that happened on the highways, and mining accidents and things like that

So you were really an important contributor in those days of not much health care then.

That's right.

That must have been a hard time.

Well, there was another doctor, Dr. Hawkins. He didn't have many patients in the

county hospital because he had rooms in his office that he took care of some of the patients.

So you had the accidents. Was that something new that you had to learn to do? or had you learned that in your training?

[laughs] Well it was very new to me! Of course, when I was in nurses' training, it was an entirely different nursing care in those days.

Now, you mentioned mining accidents. As the mines became very active, I know there were ups and downs in mining, can you tell me a little bit about what Battle Mountain was like when the mines became active and many people came from other places? Did you observe any of that?

I don't believe I observed much of that. It was just not part of my experience.

Except when there were mining accidents?

Oh, yeah.

How long did you stay in this job in this hospital?

Two years. And then I was replaced by a nurse whose name was Louella North. I married [Verden] Dale Rose then, on January 13, [1943].

Let's back up! Where did you meet Dale? Was he a Battle Mountain resident?

He was born in Battle Mountain, and we had gone through school together. He began his highway career when he finished high school when he was eighteen years of age. So we lived in Battle Mountain only for about a year. Then he was transferred.

You're talking about after you married?

After I married Dale Rose.

Was he living there in Battle Mountain?

No, he was working for the Highway Department. He was Resident Engineer on a highway job out of town. His mother was a schoolteacher in Battle Mountain, so he came back and stayed with his mother while he was working.

Renewed your friendship, and then there was a romance?

Yes.

Good. And let's see, you were what, almost thirty-five when you married him? So you were a young woman.

Yes, I was about thirty-four years old.

How did your children take to their new daddy?

They took very well. He was such a wonderful person, and he had been married before and had a little girl about four years old.

You joined families.

Yes.

And it worked out well?

Worked out very well. His little daughter didn't live with us. She lived in California with her mother, but she was in Battle Mountain occasionally to visit her grandmother, Alice Rose, who was a teacher.

So did you stay in Battle Mountain when you married?

Yes, we stayed only for that year. The Army called Dale in for three months' time, but because of an injured knee when he was a child, he was released, after three months' service. Then we moved to Carson City, his highway headquarters.

And how did you enjoy moving to Carson City?

Well, it was very traumatic for Giles and Gail, because they knew they would miss their friends in Battle Mountain, and going so far away from their grandmother. So anyway, they became adjusted to living in Carson City, and they finished their grammar school and high school years.

Did you keep up your friendships and relationships in Battle Mountain, and did you go back for visits to Battle Mountain?

Oh my, yes! We made frequent visits to Battle Mountain for special occasions, and summer vacations we went back to visit the Altenburg families and the Lemaire families, so we kept in very close touch.

Can you tell me about some of the family that you were especially close with? I know I'm going to be interviewing Eleanor Lemaire and I know she thinks so highly of you and you've been close. Can you tell me anything about what the family reunions would be like, or some of the family members that you were closer to?

Well, Eleanor Lemaire and Louis Lemaire's son and daughter, Jean and Bud Louis Mollart, were about the same age as my two children, so they were very close when they were young, growing up. They also attended college during those same years.

What college was that?

University of Nevada [Reno].

And when you would go back to Battle Mountain, did you observe changes? I know that they closed the railroad depot. What are some of the changes that you observed firsthand?

Well, the Lemaire Store had changed hands. Young Louis Mollart Lemaire had bought the Lemaire Store from the corporation. So the Lemaire Store was one of the big changes. Eleanor managed the Lemaire Store after her father-in-law died, and she tried to keep the business running for a hundred years.

Oh my!

So Eleanor has many relics from the Lemaire store that she hopes to put into a museum in the near future.

Now were there big family reunions? Or was it just personal visits?

We did have a couple of Lemaire family reunions in Reno. We had descendants of Auguste Desiré Lemaire. I guess there were four generations or more.

I hope there are photos. Maybe Eleanor has those.

Well, I have photos. Eleanor and Louis weren't able to be there, but their son and daughter, their children were all there. Many cousins of the Lemaire family. So I think there were probably fifty of us at the reunions that we held. We were interviewed by a man who did a tape, asking us what we remembered of our grandparents and so forth. So each family was interviewed on tape.

Do you have that tape?

Yes, I have it.

I'd like to borrow it one time. When you went back, I know that later the train depot was closed and the roads were built, and then Highway 80 came, taking traffic out of Battle Mountain. When you would return on visits, did you observe changes in that city as it was growing?

Well, we didn't see the changes that have taken place because we were away a great deal. There were many new mobile home courts. Building had gone out, extended out Route 8-A, so that business has moved away from town a great deal. Where there had been an airport on the west side of 8-A, that has all become stores, post office, and buildings. New businesses have developed out that route. And there's been a new golf course built in recent years. So there's been a lot of changes in Battle Mountain. The growth has been tremendous.

Uh-huh! When did you move to Winnemucca?

My husband was transferred from Carson City to Elko. He was assistant division engineer there for four years. A new division was created in Winnemucca, Number 8, and he was made district engineer in 1960. So we have been residents of Winnemucca since that time.

It's a lovely, charming city here. Have you enjoyed living here?

Yes, we have many friends in Winnemucca. The town has grown tremendously, and many changes have taken place in the thirty years we've been in this town.

And this is where your Grandpop Blossom settled. So you've come home to where he originally

settled. I got that connection! I want to go back just a lime bit. I read how when in the earlier years Battle Mountain and Austin had a real friendship: that everyone would go to Austin for the Fourth of July, and they'd go to Battle Mountain. Was that when the train was there? when transportation was easier that people did that?

Oh yes. Yes, I think when the train was in operation there was more communication that way. But the train was discontinued in 1937 and Sacramento Railroad Museum has many of the cars that were used on the Nevada Central Railroad.

I'd like to see that!

It's very interesting. My husband Fred Altenburg's nickname was "Spike." I think everyone knew him by Spike. We had home movies, and he took home movies of the Nevada Central Railroad on its last journey from Battle Mountain to Austin in 1937. When the Sacramento Museum learned of this, they borrowed the movie clip for their showing in the Sacramento Museum. Sharon Ediburn Taylor [phonetic spelling], who is now the curator of the Fallon Museum...

Not any longer.

No?! I didn't know that!

They have a new director.

For her thesis, she walked the mileage from Austin to Battle Mountain to pick up artifacts and information on the different little stations along the way, and was a very good friend of the engineer who operated the Nevada Central, the last years of its operation. He and his wife are friends of ours who live in Brigham City, Utah.

Oh, for goodness sakes! Now, do you still have that 1937 home movie?

Well, we do have a clip of it in our family pictures.

But is it at the Sacramento Museum?

The clip of the Nevada Central is in Sacramento, yes, at the museum.

Do they have that original home movie?

They just have the clip from our movies.

And where is the home movie?

In my possession.

Oh, it is an your possession.

Yes.

That is really exciting and historical. Did you ever go to Austin on the Fourth of July celebrations?

No.

That was before your time? Was that earlier?

Well, I guess it was before my time. I don't remember ever going.

Were there other such celebrations for the holidays that the whole family enjoyed, like Labor Day and Fourth of July?

Well, there was always celebrations in Battle Mountain, I think, Fourth of July. They had all sorts of races. I can't recall just what they were now. There was no stadium or recreation area in the early days, so they

used Main Street [Front Street] for all their activities and parades. That's about all I can tell you.

That's fine. Well, I do want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, for sharing your recollections of your family and your life in Lander County. Thank you very much!

You're very welcome! It's a pleasure meeting you.

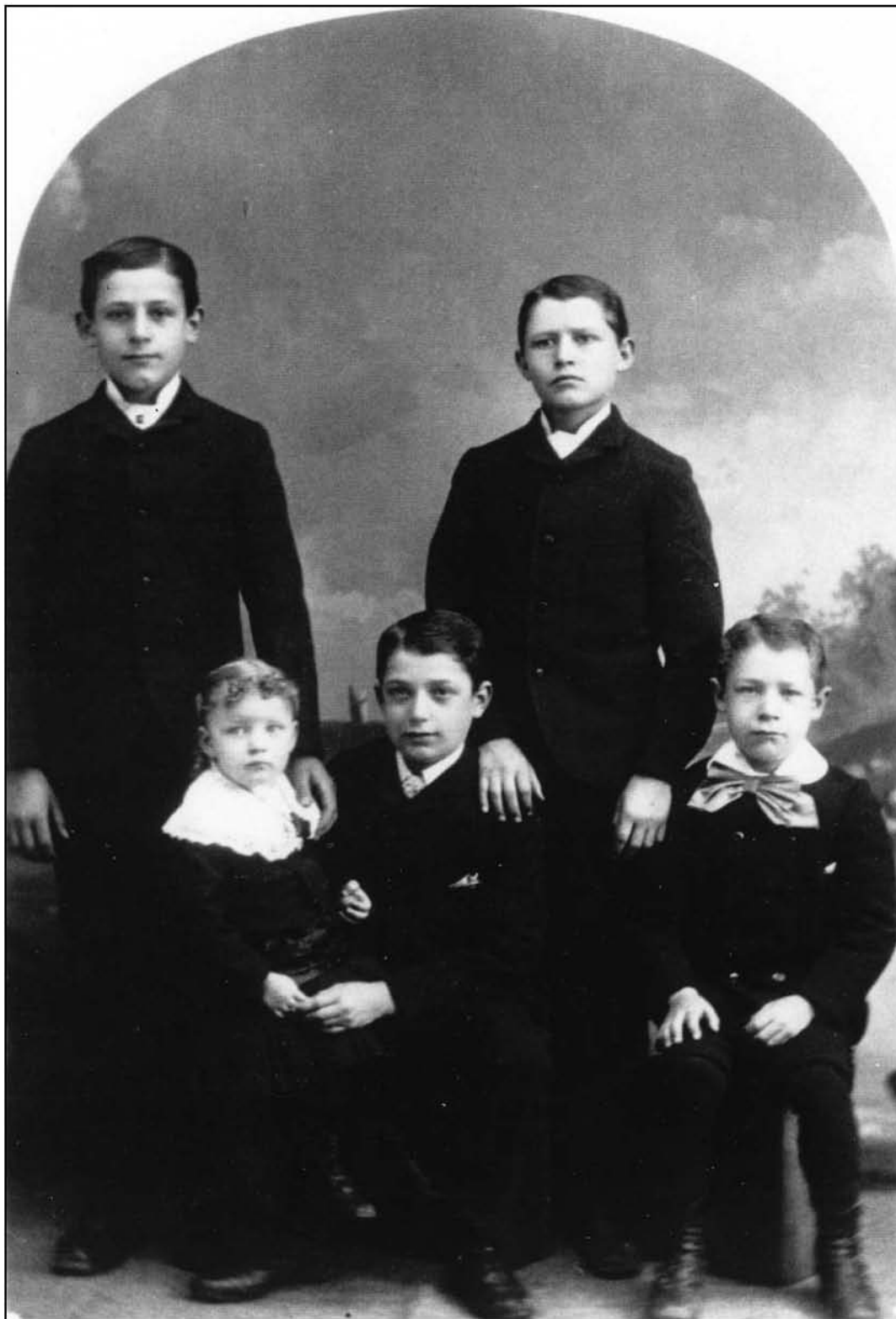
This is the end of the interview.

GRACE BLOSSOM ALTENBURG ROSE
PHOTOGRAPHS



GRACE BLOSSOM ALTENBURG ROSE, JUNE 11, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Children of Mr. and Mrs. August Desire Lemaire.
Daughter Adele is Grace Altenburg Rose's mother.

(Original photograph owned by Grace Altenburg Rose)



Auguste D. Lemaire Family. Auguste, Grandmother Joshephone Lucas, Louise Lemaire, and Adele (12 years).

(Original photograph owned by Grace Altenburg Rose)



Nevada Hotel. Fred and Estella Altenburg, Gladys and Fred J. Altenburg
(owners of the Nevada Hotel, Battle Mountain).

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, photograph #2545)



Fred Altenburg, Henry Lemaire, Wil Wilcox, Wil Altenburg, and Ad Ramsdel.

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, photograph #2524)



Central Railroad, rolling stock, Battle Mountain, ca. 1900.

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, photograph #2519)



Eliza Pierce, teacher and students at old Indian School, Battle Mountain, 1905.

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, photograph #2540)



Summer fun on the Humboldt River near Battle Mountain, Nevada. Right to left: Grace Rose, Gladys Fisher, Marion Fisher, Phillip King, Rose Filippini, Dell Sumen, and Ruth Lamb Reindollar, ca.1930.

(Original photograph owned by Rose Filippini)

GRACE BLOSSOM ALTENBURG ROSE

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

DONALD W. SCHMIDTLEIN**PREFACE**

Donald Schmidtlein's paternal grandfather, George Washington Schmidtlein, born in Iowa, joined an older brother who owned the Kingston Ranch in Smoky Valley, Nevada. After homesteading in Smoky Valley, his grandfather went back to Iowa to marry. He brought his bride home to the Schmidtlein Ranch where Don's father, Walter Schmidtlein, was born.

When Walter married Lydia Seat from California, they lived on the family ranch with the Schmidtlein family. Don was the first of three children. When he was four years old, his father and brothers bought a third ranch in nearby Kingston, where Don's family lived for sixteen years. Don describes the ranches, the Schmidtlein family, fishing and hunting, and a small one-room school, with the succession of teachers living on the ranch. After eighth grade, Don lived with relatives in Carson City for his freshman year of high school, then his mother rented a home in Austin so he and his brother could finish high school. An avid

sportsman, Don played on the basketball team. He worked on the ranch week-ends and after graduating high school returned to help his father on the ranch until serving in the military during World War II. While he was gone, his father sold the ranch and moved to Austin.

After the War, Don and his brother went into mining, then broke horses with their uncles on their ranch in Smoky Valley. He recalls his father telling him, "You were the best man I ever knew for breaking horses."

Don spent a summer working in the mountain ranges for the Forest Service and enjoyed it so much, he decided to go to college to become a forest ranger. While at Utah State, he met lone [Toni] Warner and two months later they married. He brought her back to Austin. Intermittently they farmed in Iowa, returned to Austin where Den worked as undersheriff, then returned to the Forest Service to get a degree in range management. Before his retirement in 1983, he worked for the Forest Service in Utah, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Don and Toni retired to Fallon since Toni's health problems require nearby medical attention, but would return to Austin "in a minute" if it wasn't so far from doctors and hospitals.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Don Schmidtlein at his home at 3455 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is September 19, 1993.

Mr. Schmidtlein I'm so pleased that you're allowing us to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you first give us your complete name and spell your last name.

Don Schmidtlein: Donald Walter Schmidtlein.

And where and when were you born?

I was born in Oakland, California, March 14, 1924.

I want to ask you first about your father's parents. First tell us about your father's father, his name please.

George Washington Schmidtlein.

Now can you tell us where the George Washington part came from?

[chuckles] His father, my great-grandfather, had a son older than he was, and he named him George Frederick Schmidtlein, and they abbreviated the name to Fred. And so when my grandfather was born, my great-

grandfather said that he was going to have one son that they called "George."

[chuckles] Now, was he born in the United States, or in another country?

He was born in Lockridge, Jefferson County, Iowa.

What was your paternal grandmother's name, and do you know where she was born?

Her name is Amelia Elizabeth Staub, and she was born in Lockridge, Jefferson County, Iowa also.

Did they ever tell you how they met?

I think their parents came over together and they met and he came west when he was about nineteen or somewhere in there and homesteaded and then he went back and married her.

We're going to back up a little bit. He was born in Iowa and where did he come when he came out west?

Well as far as I know, the Smoky Valley.

He came right to the Smoky Valley? Do you know what drew him there? Did he know anyone?

I think he had an older brother there.

Did they ever tell you, was the older brother with a family or also a young man who was full of adventure?

That's another story altogether. You want to hear it?

Yes, if it relates to how he got to Smoky Valley.

His brother's name was Henry and Henry was a character. He never believed in bathing. His idea of a bath was to take a five pound lard bucket of water and that was what he used to bathe with. But he was married to a lady named Mary. They had two girls and a son as far as I know and they grew up in Austin. However, his wife divorced him and when I knew Uncle Henry, he was batching and living in Austin.

Do you know, did he go to Austin because of the mining there?

Well that's where his family lived. He was a teamster.

I see.

He just retired there.

Did he ever tell you what drew the family to Austin?

They just came there because of the mining, I guess is the reason.

So now then, your grandfather went back and brought a bride here and then they settled in Iowa?

Well my great-grandparents did, but they settled here in Nevada—my grandfather. He got married while he was here in Nevada.

Which one homesteaded, your grandfather or his brother Henry?

I believe they both did. As I understood it originally that Henry had the Kingston Ranch.

So it was Henry and it was George Washington Schmidtlein and his family. Did they tell you

what it was like and what homesteading there was like?

Well one of the stories I heard was that there used to be in those days, a lot of the Indian families would come to the ranch. My grandfather was known as the potato king of Nevada. He raised potatoes and hauled 'em as a teamster. My father, in fact, drove team and they'd take 'em to Austin and Tonopah and Manhattan and Round Mountain and Clear Sparks Gold Field.

So in Smoky Valley on their homestead they raised potatoes?

Yes.

Did he ever tell you how he got water and how he started that farming?

It came from the mountains up from Sante Fe and Shoshone Cricks [Creeks] and it came down to where the Youngs now live. That's where he raised his potatoes—and a truck garden. He used to truck garden. He'd take his buggy and the team of horses and drive to Austin, and there he'd get to the upper part of Austin—that's when it was pretty well populated—and he had a booming laugh. Fact is, if you know Frank Bertrand, his laugh was a lot like his. Well, he'd go into Austin and he'd get to the upper part of town and there was some lady that lived up there close to the head of town and he would stop to sell produce to her and they'd talk and he'd laugh and he never got to move from that spot. The ladies 'ed hear him, they could hear his laugh and they'd just keep comin' to that spot. [laughter] So then he'd just turn around and go home.

Did he ever describe what they lived in, what he built as a little home for them on the first homestead?

Well I never saw it. It burned down, but yes, he had a home there and I can remember a story, they said that when he first brought my grandmother there, that she was young and he told her great stories about the Indians. The Indians had a habit of coming up and they'd cover their face and look in the windows at the ladies, and she saw this one looking in through the window and she run out the door and up to the garden where he was working. They used to laugh about that all the time.

Now when they homesteaded there, about how many other families lived there in Smoky Valley?

I don't know for sure.

Were they the first?

They were *one* of the first, but there were two or three others. Further down the valley there was a ranch owned by Frank Gendron who was a French Canadian. He still has some descendants. One lives in Gabbs, a Ruth Worthington. She's getting up in years. She's probably eighty or better now, as I remember.

Was your father born there in Smoky Valley?

Probably on a ranch, Austin or Smoky Valley, yes. So was every one of the others—three uncles and an aunt.

So were there five children in that family?

No six.'

Six?

There was four brothers, one brother died so that was the sixth one.

In that line up, where was your father?

He was, let's see, Charlie, Frank...He was fifth. I'm sorry, but my aunt was up there and Charlie and Frank and then Walter—but George Clayton was up there too.

Now tell me your father's name and do you know his birthdate?

Walter Aldon Schmidtlein.

Do you know where he was born?

Well his birth certificate is Austin, Lander County, Nevada.

Do you know what year? or you'll get that for me. Well add that. [August 12, 1895] Did he tell you much about his childhood?

Who, my father?

Your father. We're talking about your father. Was he communicative? Did he talk to you about his early childhood?

Oh yes, they were little devils. [laughter]

How old was he when he had to start with chores on the ranch? Did he talk about that? Did he talk about the work that he had to do?

I do know he said he started smoking cigarettes when he was eight years old. [chuckles] Yeah, they had to work. He believed in the work ethic. "I took a man's place in the hayfields when I was eight."

Did he talk much about the family and what life was like there?

Oh, they enjoyed it. I don't remember all the stories, but they had fun and they played with the Indian boys and girls.

How far away was the Indian colony? Or was it just scattered Indians in tents? Where were these Indians?

They usually had little shacks right on the ranch or the farm.

And did they work on the farms around there?

Yes, uh-huh.

How did he go to school? Where was there school? Did he tell you?

They went to about the third grade I think. They had a teacher there on the farm.

And then where did he go?

That was it.

That was it? There was no opportunity to go to school?

Well they could have gone to Austin but they just didn't have the means for him to do it.

Did they use horses, horse and wagon?

Yeah, they used horses and horse and buggies. My father used to drive freight wagon with produce—potatoes and so on. Fact is, he used to say he was the first man that ever turned a freight wagon around with eight head of homes on it in the streets of Manhattan.

At the mines?

Uh-huh.

Did they deliver to the mines?

Yes.

You knew your grandfather and grandmother?

Oh yes, yes. I was about twelve years old when my grandmother passed away with cancer. And I was eighteen when my grandfather passed away.

Tell me about your grandfather, what kind of a person he was and a little bit about him so we can get a verbal picture of the man.

He wasn't too tall, he was fairly heavy at times, but after he homesteaded and the boys got big enough to help on the farm, he would take off with this Frank Gendron earlier mentioned, and in the fall of the year when it started gettin' a little chilly, they'd go down south, down clear as far as were Las Vegas is now. And they'd prospect all winter and then in the spring when it started warmin' up, they could expect 'em home and they'd come home and put in the crops and so on.

So you mean he left your grandmother and the children?

They were big enough to work, so he did that every year I understand. [laughs]

Sounds really unusual, because there was more mining here than there. I don't think of Las Vegas as much...

The fact is, my grandfather found the mine at Manhattan.

Now that's up this area, near Battle Mountain.

No, that's down toward Round Mountain, just past Round Mountain, towards Tonopah.

I didn't know there was mining there in the Las Vegas area.

Oh no, they went down there prospecting. They never found anything down there.

They wanted to go to warm weather! So he would go down south and your grandmom and the kids would be there at the ranch—the boys were bigger then to work the ranch?

Well they were eight, nine, ten years old, along in there. Charlie I guess was the oldest. He was probably fifteen, sixteen.

Now let's get to where it's your grandfather who prospected and found the Manhattan Mine?

Right. And he got sick. He had part of it located so he came up and he told a nephew by the name of Louie Gordon. Anyway, he wasn't the most honest man in the world, but he told him if he would go down and finish locating it that he'd share it with him fifty-fifty. Instead of that, Mr. Gordon went down and waited 'til my grandfather's location notices had expired, then he located the whole thing in his name. But he didn't do too good. I mean they made a lot of money, but it didn't stay with him very long. [chuckles]

So your grandfather didn't make anything out of his prospecting?

Not from the mine, no.

Did he make anything out of his prospecting of the mines?

Not that I know of.

So he wasn't a successful miner?

No.

Was he a successful rancher?

Yes, yes.

And did your grandfather talk with you a lot? Did he put you on his lap or sit you near him and tell you stories of the early days there?

Oh yes. He talked more about Iowa and through there than he did this.

Oh, I don't want to hear about that, I just want to hear about Lander County. So then your dad was born in Austin but were they all living there in the Smoky Valley area?

Yes.

Did they build a little bigger place after the first small place?

They had three places, and then in 1928, my father bought the Kingston Ranch.

Now let's get back to the early homestead and the earlier period. Are there any photographs? Did you inherit any of the family photographs that we might be able to copy of Smoky Valley and the Kingston Valley or your homes there, or the little kids there?

We have some.

If you can't locate it now, I would like on a future trip to select some to make copies to add to the interview.

One note of interest, they have their own valley that it's in, but in the *Nugget*—in *Sparks Nugget* in one of the restaurants. I can't remember the name of it, but anyway, there's a big picture on the wall showing the Schmidtlein family with my grandfather, grandmother and the five children.

I have located photographs at the University of Nevada Special Collections that I've ordered, and I think I have some with the family and I'll check with you and see if it's different from that.

This is big up there. But it does say Reese River Valley—but that's the wrong valley.

Well you can take a negative and blow it up into any size. It may be the same one that I have, we'll see.

It shows them out in front of their home.

Okay, well we'll see. If not, if you have others, 'cause they were so early in that valley. So when you have time to put things together and I'll let you know how you can reach me because we want to add copies of historic photographs to the interview but also to make a negative for future—to preserve the history and have it in an archives, so that would be appreciated. What were some of the other things your grandfather told you about? Did he talk about how hard it was to homestead in an area that wasn't developed? Did he ever talk about that?

Not really.

No? What were some of the things that were vivid in his memory as he was getting...

Well the last few years, he thought a lot about, he was telling be about the Civil War and things like that.

Well, for this purpose...Tell me about your grandmother. Seems she must have had a lot of patience if her husband left and went down to Las Vegas and left her with the kids. Tell me what kind of a woman she was.

Very patient, very happy, I think. A small lady. She died, as I said, of cancer and she had a *real* strong constitution, I guess you'd say. You could walk in her bedroom—she was bedridden in the last two years of her life, and you'd walk in there and she'd have ahold of you and you'd see the pain and then she'd just relax and just be the most pleasant little lady.

Did she ever talk to you about their early life on the homestead?

No, she didn't.

She didn't. Let's get back to your grandma. What did everyone call her?

They called her "Lizzie."

Did the kids call her Grandma or just Lizzie?

We called her Grandmother all the time.

And tell me more about her. When her husband would leave for such long periods, did she ever talk about that?

No she didn't She just accepted it and that was it, but she had four big husky boys and she never *ever, ever* raised her voice, and they just jumped when she said "do it." And her husband did too! [laughter]

Really? [laughter] So she was a real strong woman.

She was strong but she was very pleasant.

How did she interact with you and with the grandchildren?

She liked us. She loved us 'cause she'd talk to us. There weren't too many mound at the time. I had two cousins that came—girl cousins that came about every year to visit, but other than that, there was my brother and I and that was about it.

Now I want to ask about your childhood. Did you grow up there in that Smoky Valley/Kingston area?

Well I lived at the ranch that he homesteaded in Smoky Valley the first four years of my life, and then I can remember moving to Kingston that my dad purchased in 1928.

We're going to go into that era now. Did your father tell you who he bought that land from or how he happened to get that in Kingston?

Well I can't remember the name of the man that owned it, but there was a family there that later moved to Fallon and they'd been running the ranch and when they moved to Fallon, my dad purchased the ranch.

Before we get him to Kingston, did he talk to you at all about his school days there when he was in Smoky Valley? Oh you said he only went through third grade?

That's all most all of 'em went through except my aunt.

Then where did he meet your mother?

On the ranch. She was born in California and her health wasn't too good and they thought she had a spot on her lung. The doctor

sent her to Eureka where she lived with her uncle and my dad's cousin who were married. And they came over deer hunting and they were there about three days or four—that was in October. And November dad went there for three or four days to Eureka. Then my mother went back to California, they corresponded until May when he went down and they got married.

Boy, that was a whirlwind romance. How old was your father and how old was your mother when they married, do you know?

Dad was twenty-seven, and mom was thirty.

Oh my they waited. Was that first marriage for each?

Yes, and it was a deep, dark secret. Dad didn't like the idea that mom was older than he was. [laughter]

She probably didn't like it either.

She didn't mind. My mom was very quiet. She never raised her voice and she just was a very small lady. Fact is, I weighed nine pounds, eight ounces when I was born and then she had to be soakin' wet to weigh a hundred pounds. [chuckles]

Now when they married, did she come back to live on the family ranch there?

Yes she did.

They all lived together?

The boys kind of lived—they had an out building where they stayed, but they'd eat their meals there.

Did you mom and dad have a separate little house?

No, not then, not 'til she moved to Kingston.

So they lived with your grandparents. How'd they ail get along?

Great.

And your mom got along okay with grandma?

Oh yeah, they were great buddies.

When did their children start arriving?

Well they got married in Oakland, California, May 28, 1923.

And when did the children start coming?

Well I came along just over nine months later.

So you were the first child.

Right. And then my brother was born just a year and two days after I was born, and then I have a sister that was born eleven years and eight months to the day after I was born.

Was there a reason why eleven years later?

Not that I know of. I can remember how excited we were to have a baby come, especially when it was a sister.

Now how long did you stay there living with your grandparents when the children started to come?

Well it was about four years 'cause it was 1923 when they came home. I was born nine

months later and then when I was four years old, we moved to Kingston with a team of horses on a hay wagon.

Now how did your father raise the money to buy that ranch, do you have any idea?

Well they had cattle—they sold cattle and they've sold potatoes and so on.

In other words, did your father and the brothers have interest in the ranch? Were they able to accumulate some of their own income?

Oh yeah, they all worked there on the ranch together except Charlie. Charlie went up to Elko and Battle Mountain and he worked in those areas cowboying for years.

When did they start to get cattle in? Was it your brothers who initiated that or your grandpa?

It was my father really.

Your father. And so then did he take the cattle with him to the Kingston Ranch?

They worked together. They worked all as one unit.

In other words, the ranch in Kingston and the ranch in Smoky Valley, everyone shared both?

Yes, and there was three ranches actually in Smoky Valley. One of 'em was where the Gilman Springs Village is right now.

Uh-huh, I know where that is.

There's a big Smoky down in the flat below there. Youngs has their homesteaded ranch plus the big Smoky Valley.

So then everyone pooled the money and bought the Kingston Ranch and your father was put in charge of it? Is that how it went?

Well dad ran the whole thing.

He ran the whole thing. Did any of the other brothers go there to Kingston or just your family?

They took turns. One of 'em would come stay with us until Frank got married, then he stayed at the home ranch.

Did they come to the Kingston Ranch to help with the work there?

Oh yeah. We worked together.

So they'd come for the branding or the cattle roundups?

Yes, and the haying and everything.
SA. *Now did you raise other things?*

By the time I came along, they were raising hay for the cattle.

The alfalfa hay?

Uh-huh.

Did they also raise potatoes?

Well to eat, not to sell. Fact is, they had sheep. They owned a herd of sheep, about eleven hundred head, for three or four years 'til they decided they weren't making money on them, so they sold 'em and replaced 'em with cattle.

Yes, I was just making inquiries about why the sheep disappeared. Did they tell you more about that?

I can remember when they sold 'em.

What were some of the reasons why the sheep weren't bringing in much?

Well they had to have herders with 'em and so on which cost money so they decided to sell the sheep. They weren't makin' the money they should at that time.

Do you know what years, about what time period that was? How old were you, do you remember?

That's what I was tryin' to think. I think I was about nine or ten years old when they sold the sheep.

And did they add more cattle then?

Yes.

Do you know how many acres the Kingston Ranch was?

A thousand.

A thousand. That was huge.

That wasn't all of their crop but it was that much land. The reason I remember that, when the ranch was sold—where they have the homes now—it was a thousand acres.

Do you know how many heads of cattle?

Yeah, we ran about twelve hundred.

So that was a major ranch.

Yeah.

Now how long did you live at the Kingston Ranch?

'Till I was twenty years old, so it would be sixteen years.

So you have a lot to tell. I visited the Kingston area, traveled around it and know that it's one of the most beautiful spots. Tell me what it was like when you were there? About how many families were there and was it very much different than now?

It was different. There was just the one family, that was us that lived at the mouth of the canyon. Albert Daniels and Maggie, his wife, lived up where the dam is. That was the Daniels' ranch up there. And that was all that lived in Kingston at that time. It was a big happening when people would come by fishing. They always had to stop in and visit and we always had a big time. [laughs]

Was the recreation area active then? Did a lot of people go fishing in that area?

Maybe two or three families a year.

Not too many. Not like today.

Transportation wasn't that good.

That's right. Did your family go in there and go fishing and picnicking?

No, we'd catch fish once in a while, but not too often.

No time? Was that the biggest reason?

Yeah, that's the biggest reason. Now I could talk about some deer hunting and stuff.

Did you go deer hunting?

Well we went deer hunting.

Who first took you deer hunting?

My uncles.

Your uncles. How old were you when you first went?

Well, I killed my first deer, a big buck, when I was eight years old.

Oh no. How did that feel was that hard to do?

Oh it was great.

It was great?

Yeah, we was up in the mountain, my Uncle Lawrence and I were dogging...

Which mountains, where did you go?

Up in Bowman Crick [Creek], and we were going along and I was out in the open brush and he was in the timber and this big buck came runnin' across there and I started shootin' and I saw him fall and my uncle come out and said, "What happened?" I said, "I got a deer up there." Well anyway, he said, "Go look." So I went up and I looked and I looked and I got up the mountain too far above where it was, so I couldn't find him, so I started jumpin' brush comin' off the mountain, and jumped right on top of it! [laughter]

Oh gosh! Did they teach you to shoot a gun before you went deer hunting?

Oh yeah. We had very, very close safety, much safety precautions and so on.

Did your father go hunting?

Well he never did go hunting with me. He went hunting for several years until one time another man started shootin' and he was in line with it and he was tryin' to duck and the deer kept followin' *him* and he never went hunting again.

Got scared?

Yeah. But we used to have people from California would come up every year, Bill Orvis and some others and they would hunt for ten days or two weeks.

Oh my, and camp out?

No, they stayed right with us.

Stayed with you, I see.

They were good friends.

Now I want to go back again and I wanted to know more about the house that you lived in at Kingston Ranch, what it was like? Was there water, was there indoor plumbing? Describe the house.

The house was a brick house. Had three bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen and a dining room.

Was the house on the ranch when you bought it?

Yes, yes.

Okay.

Fact is, I can still remember when we first moved there that we slept outside for two or three nights because there happened to

be some bed bugs [laughter] and my mother was fumigating. But anyway, we did not have running water or indoor plumbing. There was a little house out back and we packed water from a ditch that came off the main stream. Had a little milk house about, oh, seventy-five feet from the main house and I can still remember.

Was that where they kept things cold?

Yeah, in the summer time. We kept meat there in the wintertime. But my mother would run, just trot, back and forth, bang, bang, bang. Then when I got old enough to start breaking horses, she must have known when because during that period of time when I was first startin' to ride one, she would never show up and then you know that door stop...

I want to go back to the house before we get into the horses and other things. How did you heat that house?

With a kitchen stove and a pot-bellied stove in the living room.

What was the fuel?

Wood.

And where did you get the wood?

Drug it out of the mountains then hauled it with teams.

Which mountains?

Well the Toiyabes and the Toquimas both.

Did you have to chop your own wood? were you allowed to do that?

Oh yeah, we just went out and got it. It was all open. That was before the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) came in and so on.

In other words, you could just chop trees?

Well we always drug dead wood in.

Oh the dead wood.

No. [laughs]

Big supper too?

We might eat a couple of big steaks and all the potatoes and everything. [laughs]

Did your mom have help cleaning up and all that in the kitchen?

When I was growin' up, she had me. The men would go out and lay down and rest at noon and I'd go help her, had to help her do the dishes.

So you were a good boy. You were a helper. So she worked real hard too.

Yes she did.

Where did the family buy supplies and clothes and shoes and overalls and household supplies? Where did they buy all that?

Well, after we were able to get a car that was servicable they got the staples mostly right in Austin, there were a couple of grocery stores. But then as I got older, Dad had a pickup and every so often, the teacher would live right there in our home with us, and she'd pay like thrity dollars a month which was good money in those days, and then about

every two, three months, he'd come to Fallon and that pickup would just be loaded as high as it could and it bought enough groceries for both ranches and that'd last for three or four months.

Did you go with him?

Well, not too often. I didn't like that long slow ride. The drive used to be twenty-five [chuckles], thirty miles an hour.

Was a dirt road first?

Yeah it wasn't paved then.

Now I'll get to the school in a little bit, but I wasn't to find out, too, how your mom handled the laundry.

We spent a lot of time out there, and as we got older, dragging the wood down then we'd haul it.

Tell me in your household, what were mealtimes like? Did everyone eat together?

Yup. Everyone ate together.

Who did the cooking?

My mother. She was a good cook.

Describe for me, as you were growing up, what a typical breakfast, lunch or dinner—I don't know what you had in a day—and supper. What were the meals that your family ate?

[chuckles] Well, we usually had pancakes and eggs, and sometimes potatoes, but we always had bacon and ham. We made our own bacon and ham.

We? Who's "We"?

Yes she did.

My uncle and I. We'd kill the pigs.

Where did the family buy supplies and clothes and shoes and overalls and household supplies? Where did they buy that?

Yeah, you did that too?

When I got older, yeah.

Well, after we were able to get a car that was serviceable they got the staples mostly right in Austin, there were a couple of grocery stores. But then as I got older, Dad had a pickup and every so often, the teacher would live right there in our home with us, and she'd pay like thirty dollars a month which was good money in those days, and then about every two, three months, he'd come to Fallon and that pickup would just be loaded as high as it could and it bought enough groceries for both ranches and that'd last for three or four months.

Oh my.

Then for lunch we always had big meals 'cause we were always workin' hard. We'd come in out of the hay fields and it was different. We had a lot of variety—like stew—but it was different. Good meals, lots of vegetables, we raised our own vegetables. We had lots of fruit, we had a big apple—well all kinds of orchards there and it was great.

Did your mom bake the bread?

Did you go with him?

Oh yes, yes. It was very good.

Well, not too often. I didn't like that long slow ride. The drive used to be twenty-five [chuckles], thirty miles an hour.

Would you have a light supper?

No. [laughs]

Was a dirt road first?

Big supper too?

Yeah it wasn't paved then.

We might eat a couple a big steaks and all the potatoes and everything. [laughs]

Now I'll get to the school in a little bit, but I want to find out, too, how your mom handled the laundry.

Did your mom have help cleaning up and all that in the kitchen?

Well, some on a scrubbing board, and I can remember she did it by hand—that was the way she did it. We helped her. We had to help her. We didn't like that too much, but we did it.

When I was growin' up, she had me. The men would go out and lay down and rest at noon and I'd go help her, had to help her do the dishes.

Did you have lines strung around?

So you were a good boy. You were a helper. So she worked real hard too.

Yeah, she had clotheslines that she hung 'em up on. She was very meticulous too. Very

hard-working lady. Everything had to be spotless.

What did you have to light the house before the electricity? What did you use?

Had kerosene lights at first. Just regular kerosene. Then all of a sudden we graduated, we got an Aladdin lamp. Boy that was paradise.

When did electricity come there to your Kingston Ranch?

It was after I left when I was twenty years old.

You didn't get to enjoy that. You mentioned the school teachers so I want to know when did a school teacher come? When was there a school there for you children?

From the time I was old enough to go to school until I graduated to go into high school.

Was there a small school building?

Yes. It was one of our buildings but it was designated as a schoolhouse.

One of your buildings?

Yeah.

And where did the teachers come from?

Well the one that started out there was Essie Mullin from Austin. She had a daughter, her dad was the chairman of the school board, and always had to hire a teacher with at least one child, because they didn't have enough to have school otherwise. [laughs]

In other words, the teacher had to bring a child?

Well, if they had one.

I thought married women couldn't teach.

Oh yeah! Mrs. Mullin taught for four years out there—the first four years of my schooling.

But where were their husbands?

They died or somethin'.

Okay, so they wouldn't leave their husbands to come to teach.

Oh no, no, no.

They were a little bit older?

Well, not always. One of 'em lives here in Fallon now yet. She's in a rest home. She was from Reno, but she left her husband. She had a daughter.

Then they lived with you, the daughter and the teacher?

No, they had two rooms. They had like a kitchen and a little bedroom/living room type deal.

Where was that? In your home?

No, it was just across the driveway.

Separate little building?

Right next to the school house, yes.

How many kids were in your class? Was it just your family or other kids from nearby ranches?

It was just really our family plus there was usually a miner. Well in my own class, one time I remember there was two of us. There was at least three classes or four in each schoolroom with a total of, I think, five or six young kids. That's the most I remember there.

Well, if there was more than one room, how did the teacher teach all of them?

Just individually at a time. He'd take so many of 'em.

In separate rooms or one room?

No, it was just one room.

When it was mostly you and your borthers and sisters, did it work out? Was there sibling rivalry or were there any problems at all?

No, not really. I remember one teacher had a boy just about my age. That's the time both of us were in the same grade and we got along pretty good except once in a while, you know how kids are, we had a little fisticuffs. I was a little stronger than he was, I guess. but anyway, his mother drew a line and said, "Now you can't go over that line, either of your." Well it didn't take us long to figure out we could play with that line between us and [laughing] get along great. So we solved that pretty easy and she could see where she wasn't gettin' too much out of it, so she withdrew her...

Now how many teachers were there, how long would they stay?

Well the longest was four years that I remember. Another one or two stayed about three and some of 'em were single teachers. They'd come and stay.

How many grades did you get through?

Eight.

That was the elementary and then no more was offered?

Oh yeah, not there they wasn't. My freshmen year I went to Carson City and lived with my aunt and uncle.

In high school?

Uh-huh. And then the next three years I graduated in Austin.

You got through the eighth grade at the ranch and what were some of the subjects taught and were you beginning to like some things better than others?

I always liked school, but they just taught the regular curriculum: reading, writing, arithmetic, and so forth.

Now did all of you go away to Carson City?

No. My brother was a year behind me and he graduated out there, then the next year, my mother and us all moved to Austin.

You moved to Austin so you could finish school, all of you?

We'd go to home weekends and work on the ranch.

Did your father stay out at the ranch?

Well, most of the time, but he'd come and stay because my uncles were out there also.

Where did you live when you went into Austin?

We rented a home.

Do you know the location?

I don't remember the name.

Was it close to your school?

Well we had quite a ways to walk. It was a little uphill goin' and downhill coming.

Okay, now when you went into Austin, tell me how old you were and what grade.

I guess I was about thirteen, fourteen.

Had you been into Austin much from the ranch before you moved there?

Maybe once a year if we thought we were lucky.

When you first went into Austin, do you remember how old you were when you first went into Austin?

Dad used to take us in maybe once, twice a year if he had to go in, but I imagine I was ten or twelve—somewhere in there.

From your earliest memories, what did Austin seem like to you? What was it like?

Oh it was big. We had some friends from different ranches, we'd usually run into some of them and we'd go around together and there was always a bunch of the town kids would follow us around and so on, but we never had any trouble with 'em.

What did it look like? What did the city look like to you?

Like it does now, I guess. [laughs]

Does it pretty much?

I think there's a little more population, but it hasn't changed that much except a couple of the big hotels have burned down and they're not like they used to be.

Were you glad to move to Austin or did you miss the ranch?

We never had an opportunity to miss the ranch cause we were back there every weekend except during basketball season and we played basketball while we were gone.

Were you excited about moving into Austin?

Oh yeah, it was nice, but we enjoyed gettin' back to the ranch in the spring.

Did you make a lot of friends in Austin?

Well I think so. [chuckles] Got along alright with 'em.

I mean it was an entirely different life. You were isolated on the ranch kind of and then to move into what must have seemed a much different kind of life.

Well it didn't seem that different because the year before I'd been in Carson City and I adjusted and fit in there real well so.

Oh okay. So tell me, it was your mom and your—how many of you were there in Austin?

Well, Mom usually went in and stayed with us, Dad would come in sometimes. But there were times when my brother and I were there just alone and did our own batching and stuff, too.

Your own little house?

Uh-huh, we were dependable.

Did you finish high school there?

Yes. I graduated from there in 1942.

And what were some of the things teenage kids—when you were going through high school—what did they do for fun?

Oh, we'd just get out and get together in the evenings and stuff, except at Halloween we never got in any mischief.

I understand there were dances all the time and a movie theater. Did you participate in all that?

Yeah, a little bit. [laughs]

You're laughing?

Quite a little bit! [laughter]

Was that fun?

Oh yeah. I enjoyed it.

So you didn't have those things at the ranch.

No, I know, but we took it in stride. It's just somethin' that happened. We had electricity when we went to high school in Austin—we went out to the ranch and we didn't, but it didn't bother us any.

But I mean you had movies here in Austin. Did you go to the movies and the shows?

Well, when we got into high school, we started havin' movies once a week, Saturday

nights. A lot of times we missed those because...

Oh, because you'd be going home to the ranch?

Yeah.

Did you have to work hard when you went home weekends?

Oh yeah. We had plenty to do.

When you were going to high school, what are some of the remembrances about high school? I understand that they had things like tennis and other sports. Did you participate?

Not at that time.

Not at that time.

All they had in Austin was basketball, and I've always been an avid sportsman, so... But I had the privilege of playing on the first basketball team in Austin that ever won a game away from home, or ever went to a state tournament.

Where was that?

Carlin. We went and beat Carlin that year and then won several other games. Then my senior year, we went to the state tournament in Reno.

That must have been exciting.

Oh yeah, we were pretty happy about it.

When you were going through high school, did you develop any areas of interest that made you think about what you might want to do

after high school or did you want to go back to the ranch?

I wanted to back to the ranch right then.

That's what you loved?

Yeah.

Tell me about graduation.

What about it?

Well did they have a graduation ceremony? Describe what it was like.

There were seven students graduated with me. Seven of us total graduated the year I was there, which was a pretty good size class for Austin. I remember I was the...What's the second one? I wasn't the...I think salutatorian. I can remember, I think I've still got [chuckles] the speech I gave, somewhere.

Did you write it?

I did it myself, yeah. I participated a lot—I was in a lot of plays and stuff. We had at least two plays a year.

Do you remember any special teacher that was a favorite or inspirational or helpful or someone that you....

Well yes.

Who was that?

Her name was Mary Weeks. She was from Wells. And she was tough, but she was fair. She was probably the best teacher I ever had.

Now what subject did she teach?

You name it. [laughter] I know she taught algebra and she taught Spanish and what was the other one? I forget. I took a lot of classes from her.

So you were a good student and you liked it?

Well yeah, I tried.

Now when your mom was there, when she would stay through the week and she didn't have all the ranch work, did she become interested in other things in Austin?

Oh, she had her friends. They'd visit back and forth and so on.

Because it must have been a completely different life after the hard, hard week at the ranch to be in Austin. Did she join any of the women's organizations? Or was there a church that she went to there?

No, no. She had her family and she was happy with that. My sister was nearly twelve years younger than I was.

So she was little, small yet.

They were real close, yeah.

But she did make friends there?

Oh yeah, she had lots of good friends.

So that must have been nice because at the ranch she had her family but not friends of her own, very easily.

Well, people would come by at the ranch. They'd come by, say, on a Friday night and

they might stay a whole weekend or so. There was a lot of people that would do that.

When you finished high school in Austin, you were the oldest. Then did she stay there? or was your brother old enough to stay alone there?

No, he didn't stay alone. We had a friend there, Katie Bonner, that he stayed with her for his senior year. Then we'd get him and bring him home on weekends and so on.

So you went back to the ranch?

Oh yeah.

So tell me what it was like and what your responsibilities were as kind of a young man now. Did it change? Did you get more responsibility?

Well, I did most of the ranch work. [chuckles] Dad was county commissioner, and I had an uncle by that time that had married and he stayed there but his family went to Washington during the winter for school and then came back in the summer. But we used horses and I did most of that.

Now you said your dad—I want to know more about that, he became county commissioner? Tell me what that entailed.

Well about like it does now I guess. He was county commissioner, for four-year terms and he put in two.

That's when it was in Austin?

Uh-huh.

Uh-huh, and did he ever tell you or do you know some of the things that were accomplished during his terms as commissioner?

He could've got runnin' for another term and got elected if he'd a' wanted to but I told him I'd leave home if he did. [chuckles]

Too much responsibility for you, and you wanted to leave by then?

No, I just didn't think that he should be gone as much as he was.

He was gone a lot?

Yeah.

Do you know some of the things that were accomplished in the county while he was commissioner?

Well, the roads were brought up to better standard than they'd ever been before and he did not show partialism. He treated everybody the same.

Would he come home and talk about some of the things?

Oh yeah. Yeah, he did. [laughter]

Were there battles?

Dad liked to talk a lot. Yeah, there was a lot of fights and stuff. Well, I mean not fist fights but...

Sure. Do you remember anything else besides the roads?

He was on the draft board too, I know that.

So that was during the war that he was on?

Yeah.

That must have been a nice change for him, always being a rancher, to get in to something like that. Did he enjoy that?

Oh yeah, he liked it.

So who was left now at the ranch? You were there, you said you did most of the work. Where was your brother?

Well he was in school and then as soon as he got out of school, he went in the Army.

Oh, 'cause it was wartime.

Yeah. And I told my dad, I said "I'll either stay 'til I'm drafted or until you're out of debt." So I stayed about a year, about a year-and-a-half longer than he did.

Than who?

Than my brother. My brother went in—see he's younger than I am but he went in the service first 'cause he didn't want to stay on the ranch at that time.

At that time, I understand that at ranches, they allowed one person not to be drafted to help on the ranch? Were you able to stay?

I was the one they picked. I didn't ask for it.

But that meant that you didn't go into the service.

But I did end up going.

Why?

Because I said I was going. [chuckles]
When my dad, the year 1944 we brought the

cattle out of the mountains and he had enough cattle to keep what they wanted plus get out of debt totally, and he asked me if I wanted to be deferred again and I said "no." He said "okay."

Was that because of patriotism, or was it because of your peers that everyone was doing it?

No, no, I just wanted to go. I guess patriotism, you'd say.

Did you have to leave the country?

Oh yeah, I was over in Okinawa and Iwo Jima and all that area.

Did you come out without being hurt I hope?

Oh yeah.

So how long were you gone?

Two years.

And then did you go back to the ranch?

No, they sold it while I was gone.

Why?

Well, they just didn't think they could handle it without me I guess. That's one of the reasons they gave. But Dad decided he wanted to retire, so they moved into Austin.

How old was he then, do you know? Have any idea?

I thought he was old then [chuckles] but he probably was in his fifties.

Were all the kids gone by then?

My sister wasn't, no.

Oh that's right. So they sold the ranch.

They sold the Kingston Ranch.

The Kingston Ranch.

See they'd split up by that time: two of my uncles, Frank and Lawrence, took where the Youngs are now, and my dad and Charlie took the Kingston and the Gilman place. So by that time, they were divided between them.

How did you feel when you learned—did you know they were going to sell it? Were letters going back and forth?

I knew they were gonna try.

How did you feel about that?

Oh I'd a liked to come back to the ranch, but I wasn't upset. I've always been able to adjust.

But I mean it was not like some families where the ranch goes to the sons?

Oh no, uh-uh.

No, nothing like that.

I didn't even expect that.

So they moved into Austin, and when you came home, there was no home on the ranch.

No, so they insisted we stay with them, my brother and I, so we boarded with them.

In the town of Austin.

Uh-huh.

Now when you came back, and you went to move to Austin, were there many changes because of the war, or effects of the war in Austin?

Not really.

Pretty much the same? What did you do when you went back to Austin, and you couldn't ranch? What did you do?

Well I went to mining. [chuckles] I wasn't gonna do anything for a while, and then about a week after I got there, I was in the barber shop and a man from out at New Pass, which is still in...Is that Churchill County? Yeah, but it's just over the line. He came in the barber shop and he talked me into going out there and going to work for the winter so I worked there all winter at the New Pass Mine.

What did you do?

I mined, I was the hoisting engineer.

How did you know how to do that?

Well, they taught me how.

So they taught you.

It didn't take long. They showed me one time and I had it from there.

So you were pretty smart anyway.

I don't know about that, but I adapted.

Did you like it?

Yeah, I enjoyed it.

So did you miss the ranching?

Oh yeah, my brother and I left the next spring. We quit the mine and went out and we broke horses with my uncles. We had some that we'd kept when we left that hadn't been broken.

Now were these uncles still in Smoky Valley?

Yeah, at the Young Ranch—they hadn't sold yet.

I see, so they hadn't sold yet. Now which uncles were they?

Frank and Lawrence.

So tell me about breaking horses. Were these the wild horses?

No, these were horses that we raised, but nobody'd handled them while we were gone, and some of them were five and six years old, so they wanted some broke, and we had some of our own we wanted to break so we could sell 'em. So we went out.

Had you done that when you were on the ranch?

Oh yeah.

Did you ever deal with the wild horses that I hear so much about?

Well, they didn't bother about them in those days. If we wanted to catch some wild horses we went out and caught 'em—there wasn't any law against it.

No, I know that, but I mean did you have that experience of catching and breaking-in the wild horses?

Yeah, uh-huh.

Okay, because I know a lot of people told me about it. Were there lots of them in the valley?

Yeah, we raised most of them I broke, but I broke horses for a good many of the ranchers around there too.

Did you ever get hurt?

No.

It could be pretty dangerous. I've talked to some who got hurt on those.

Well, if you're careful. .. I was lucky, I guess. [chuckles] My aunt told me, she said, "I've never seen you get hurt except when you was fooling with an old, gentle horse," and I never did walk home. [chuckles]

So about how many horses have you broken-in? Lots?

I guess about twenty-five, thirty, maybe fifty head.

Never know it to look at you, would you?

She'd rather see me riding than anything else.

But riding and breaking-in wild horses are two completely different things, right?

Oh, I know. Fact is, my dad—this really meant a lot to me—when we moved back out here to help take care of my father and mother, dad was pretty lucid yet, and he told me one day, "Don, something I've been wanting to tell you and never have. You were the best man I ever knew for breaking horses."

Oh, boy, that's a wonderful compliment. I know he wouldn't tell you that unless he really meant

it. So you were doing the mining and you were breaking horses at the Smoky Valley with your uncles. How long did that go on?

Well, we just left the mines about six weeks, and then we had to go back to work somewhere else.

So then what did you do?

I went back to mining. I worked at a mine out of Austin.

What mine and what kind of mine?

It was a gold mine. I was out by the castle there.

So mining was flourishing after the war?

No, there were just a few little mines.

Did you still go out and work at the ranch, too, with your uncles?

Oh, I'd go out and help 'em sometimes, yeah.

Once in a while?

Then I worked for the Forest Service one summer. But before I did that, the Monitor Ranch, which is one of the big ranches out there, the people there came and asked me if I'd come out and help them move cattle and stuff in the spring. So my brother and I went.

Oh, that's your brother...

Bob. But the two of us, when we worked about six weeks, I guess, because I'd told the forest ranger I'd work for him that summer.

What did you do in the forest? Was Frank Bertrand in the Forest Service at that time?

Not at that time, no. He was later.

What did you do, your first experience with the Forest Service? What did you do and where?

I started out building fence and so on, but it wasn't too long until I was inspecting range. [chuckles]

A leader! Now tell me how old you were when you were doing this, and where the ranges were.

Well, I was twenty-three, I guess. About twenty-two and twenty-three.

And where were the ranges that you inspected?

Well in the Toiyabes and in the Monitors and the Toquimas right there.

So you were back close to your Kingston area.

Oh yeah.

Were you a little homesick for your ranch?

Oh no, I enjoyed working with the forest rangers. Then I decided to go to college. So I went to Logan, Utah, and that's where I met my sweetheart.

Oh, now wait, let's back up a little bit. You decided to go to college. What did you want to be?

A forest ranger.

Oh, in other words, this experience excited you?

Well, yeah, I liked it.

Did you have to have a degree?

Yes.

What college was it in Utah?

Utah State.

And what made you pick that?

It was rated as the number one range college in the world at that time.

Oh my! And had you accumulated enough money to go?

Well, yeah.

So did you apply before you saw it? Or did you go to see it? Or how did you start your college?

I went up and saw it and they told me I could get in, so I did.

Did you know anyone who was going there?

Not at the time, no.

So you went alone?

Yup.

Did you stay in the dorms?

No, I stayed in a boarding house—there was fourteen of us that lived in the boarding house.

How many years did you go there?

Well at that time I went just a little over one quarter. Then I got married and moved back to Nevada.

Now wait a minute! Now first you tell me, even though we know it, it's on record, I want you to tell me the gal that you met that you then married, her full name, including her maiden name.

Okay, her name was Ione Warner. She doesn't like Ione, she likes to be called Toni.

Well, we need to know for the record.

Yeah, I think it put it on there.

And her maiden name was?

Warner.

What did you call her? Did you call her Ione?

No! I'd have got killed if I'd done that!

When you first met her?

Toni—that's all I knew her by then.

How did you meet?

We met in a taxi cab one stormy night.

Tell me about it.

Well, I was riding around with a buddy of mine from the boarding house who drove cab part-time. It was stormy and he said, "Why don't you ride with me?" So we had these calls, and there was only one seat left, and that was between us on the front seat, and it was her that we picked up. So after we dropped everybody else off, we sat there and talked a while and I gave her a big story about I was from Arizona and had a wife and four kids! [laughs] Anyway, I never saw her for another week then. On a Saturday I said to

my buddy—he knew her best girlfriend real well—and I said, “You know Dixie’s number, why don’t you call and get a date with her and see if Toni will go out with me.”

Oh, a double date.

So that’s what happened. From then on we saw each other every day, at least every evening, until Christmastime. Then I came back to Austin for a few days at Christmastime. I went back, we were married January 7, 1949.

Oh my gosh! Now what month did you meet?

We knew each other two months and one day when we got married.

That’s incredible!

We knew on the first date what was going to happen.

You brought her back to Austin?

Yeah, and she loved it. She’d go back there in a minute to live.

That’s wonderful. So you went back to live in Austin?

Well, we lived there for a while, and we moved to Gabbs for a while.

Now where did you live in Austin? Did you live with your folks or did you rent your own place?

We did for a little while, but we rented a place then up on...can’t remember the names of the streets up there. But we lived in a house up on the hill, and then we bought a home.

So how long did you live there altogether in Austin?

At that time, about six months. Then we moved to Idaho and bought a farm up there.

Okay, well we’re not going to get Idaho in here, but I want to go back to Austin.

We moved back to Austin after we were married. The first job I got, my father and I leased the Casady service station. We had that for, I don’t know, six months I think.

Did your dad work with you there?

Yes. And then we left there and...

Was it because the gas station didn’t do well?

Well, that was part of it.

And then what did you do?

Interviewer’s note: The interview session was interrupted when Don Schmidtlein’s daughter and grandson came in. This is now the second session of the interview with Don Schmidtlein at his home at 3455 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is June 8, 1994. This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project.

Good afternoon, Don. I m so glad that we can finally complete the interview. It’s my first time back to Fallon since our first interview. When we ended, they were asking you to come back to Austin. I want you to take up your story from there.

We said we wouldn’t, but then we went on down to California just out of Sacramento and visited with some relatives there, and I got a

phone call from the Sheriff of Lander County, and he talked me into coming back to take the undersheriff's job in Austin. So we talked it over and we went back to Austin then. That was 1956, in the fall.

Now, when you went back and you had this large family, how did you find housing?

They found housing for us. That's the reason we took it, went back, because he had found a house.

So can you tell me where that house was and what kind of a house it was?

It was a two-story house. They called it "The Bird Cage" and it was on Main Street where there used to be the bank.

I believe it's now the Trading Post.

That's correct.

Now I want to find out from you what it looked like, coming back there, after your absence. Were there many changes?

Not really. There were a lot of people there at the time, because it was kind of a mining boom going on. But as far as changes in the houses and so on, no.

Were there any new businesses?

Not really, still the service station, the bars, and so forth.

So now tell me, when you settled-in, what your job was, and tell me about that.

Well, I was the undersheriff there for three years. It was quite interesting, because

the Sheriff lived in Battle Mountain, and even when he came up there, they'd come to me instead of him. Of course, that's the way he wanted it!

So for those of us who don't know anything about what an undersheriff does—and many won't know what Austin is—give me some specific details of your responsibilities and some of the things you had to handle.

Well, the responsibility was to try to keep law and order in town, keep as much problems down as could be, and take care of problems when they arose.

Okay, so give me specifically in a town like that, what some of the problems were and how often they occurred.

Probably the most often-occurring problem was people getting drunk and trying to drive, or getting into fights and having to go break them up and put somebody in jail for at least overnight 'til they sobered up, or make sure that they didn't get in a car and take off. There were a lot of other legal things: anything that pertained to breaking the law, or to hurting somebody or something. It all had to be taken care of.

Was there a separate Highway Department that handled traffic, or did you have to handle that too, with the cars coming right through town and no side highway?

We handled it then. They didn't have Highway Patrol in the area, so anytime there was an accident within a hundred miles of Austin, one way or the other, I usually ended up there investigating it and taking care of what needed to be done—also making sure that the ambulance worked correctly and so on.

What kind of hours did you have to serve?

[chuckles] *All the time!*

Were you on call twenty-four hours?

Right. I got ten days off every month, in a row, and they'd have someone else take my place for that time. But when I was there, I was on twenty-four hours. There were times when it was very boring, because there wasn't much to do, and then all of a sudden it would break loose and I was going practically day and night. My wife told me when a lady that [chuckles] was drunk came up to the door one night just after I'd gone to bed about two o'clock in the morning, and we slept on a hide-a-bed in the living room, and I had just fallen asleep and I woke up and I heard this knocking. I mistakenly said "come in," and she fell across the foot of our bed! [laughs] And my dear sweetheart said, "That's enough, Honey. We don't need this any more." [laughter]

That's a funny story!

It's a true story!

Now, were a lot of these incidents from migrant workers, people who didn't belong there, or traveled through? Or were a lot of them from the citizens who lived there?

A lot of it was from migrant workers coming in, and so on. It's interesting, a part about this other was that the lady that fell over the foot of the bed had been married to the ex-deputy sheriff that I replaced! [laughs] Another time, the telephone station was right where the Chevron Station is now, the office. And the operators were local ladies that we knew real well Louise Casady was one. And

she told me one day about three guys and a girl, young lady, that came through and got gas, and about three days later they came back and they had a different car. So she got suspicious, and they parked the car up in back on the side street, and then they went and ate at a restaurant there. I went down and I looked them over, and when they came out, I let them get up close to their car, and then [chuckles] told them that...I asked them some questions and they started giving me all kinds of answers, so I told them to get up against the car with their hands so I could make sure they didn't have a weapon. And then as I started them up the street towards the jail, walking behind them, the owner of the service station, Roy Casady came out, and he had a rifle. And I didn't know it then, but I found out later that he had been at the window of his bedroom with his rifle in hand in case I run into trouble. [chuckles] So the people were willing to help.

Oh my. Now where was the jail?

The jail was up in the old Lander County Courthouse.

Oh, in the courthouse, that's right, I did see that.

I had these particular people, they were escapees from an institution up in Oregon, and they had stolen several cars and robbed slot machines, and pop machines and so on. And they always tried to get me to come into the jail by myself, and I wouldn't do it. I always had somebody out there armed, out in the foyer. Anyway, when they left, after several days they came and took them, and when they left they had all kinds of stuff. They had torn a blanket up so it was like a rope. And they had some wood. There's a wooden stove in there, and they had some wood put together so they'd have conked me on the head. So it was exciting at times.

It's a dangerous job.

Yeah.

So now when these migrant workers were coming in, were some of the mines.

It was a boom time.

Do you know which mines were booming?

Just several around.

Do you know where the workers came from?

From all over. A man by the name of Fred Volmer, who did a lot of mining with the stocks, sold stock and so on, was the man that was the head operator.

How long did you stay there as undersheriff?

I worked as undersheriff until about 1957, and then I went to work for the U.S. Forest Service, and I worked for them there until I went to college in 1960.

Okay, let's back up. Did you still stay in Austin when you worked for the Forest Service?

Yes.

How did you happen to change jobs to work for the Forest Service?

Well, it was a long story, really.

Well, tell it.

They changed rangers, and the new ranger came in and I thought it was kind of funny, because he started in the fall, and he'd call me up and he'd say, "If you're going by the

office here, could you stop by?" or he'd stop in at least once a month by the sheriff's office, and he'd chat a while, and he'd always ask me questions about the range and so on, and jobs. He always ended up by saying, "Now Don, can you give me a list of people you'd recommend, because I need a man here on the district." And every month it was that way. And I went in there in April, I guess he called one day and I went up to this office, and he brought up the same question. I said, "Well, gee, John—this was John Kinchloe—" I've given you several names several times." "Well, they're not just who I want." [chuckles] And I was just kidding and I said to him, "Well, maybe I ought to apply for the job!" And boy, he jumped at it! Found out later that's what he was trying to lead up to all winter, see? Because the other ranger that left told him that he recommended me. But anyway, that's how come he asked me about wages I could work for, and we looked at it, and I did take a cut in pay, but in the long run it really paid off.

Were you able to stay in that house when you left the undersheriff's position? Or was that part of the undersheriff's job?

We bought a home.

During the time you were undersheriff?

Yeah. It was up towards the upper part of town—Frank Bertrand owns it now, in fact.

Oh, is that the house they live in?

No, they rent it [out], but as you're going up through Austin, it's on the right-hand side of the street, the last house up there. It was really a nice little house. We stayed there until we decided to go to college, and then Frank bought it from us.

So now let's get back to when you were first lured into the Forest Service. How much notice did you have to give to your boss, the sheriff?

Oh, I gave him two weeks, so he could find somebody. The fact is, I even stayed on a little while after that—that is, just in the evenings if they needed help and stuff.

So now start telling me what your responsibilities were for the Forest Service.

Well, building fence, fixing fence, checking or inspecting range, fighting forest fires.

Can't get out of danger can you?!

No, I kind of did that as part of my career in the Forest Service, working and fighting fires.

Did you have to stay away overnight like Frank [Bertrand] sometimes did in the Toiyabe Forest?

Oh yeah, sometimes a week or ten days at a time.

And your family were left without you at home?

But they liked it. I'd take her to the hills. We'd stay up at Kingston in the summertime.

All of you?

And we'd have a hard time getting those kids back to school in the fall.

What would you stay in?

They had a station up there.

Oh, how wonderful!

We'd go up there as early as we could go up, and we'd stay as late as we could in the fall.

Because it's so beautiful there, I know.

And that's where more or less I headquartered up there then for the summer. The kids would make bargains with us that she'd go down and meet the school bus down at Young's ranch and then meet them at night, so they could stay.

Oh, what fun!

But it was fun, they liked, it. They liked the fishing and stuff, and so did I.

Were you a fisherman?

Oh yes.

So you stayed until when? How long?

We decided to go to school and I moved to Logan, Utah in 1960.

Now, is there anything else in that period in Austin before we leave that for you to go to college? In other words, were there other activities in your life?

The same period of time that we stayed up Kingston, we could get up in the morning and see deer and blue grouse and all kinds of porcupines, from little babies up 'til full-grown, up and down the canyon. There was a lot of wildlife. And we used to, in the fall of the year when it was deer season, they used to have a buck and a doe season, so I'd go get the buck, and then I'd get up real early in the morning before daylight and all the kids always wanted to go with me. It was kind of a tradition, got to be. And we'd go up there

and I could always get a nice fat doe up there at the old Daniels' place, where now the fish pond is. That was kind of a tradition. They really enjoyed going out and seeing Dad get that deer.

That sounds wonderful. Did you get any pictures of this period? Photographs?

No, I don't think we have. Also at the same time, in civic organizations, I was chaplain of the American Legion, and then I was later, before we left there, I was the commander for the post.

Then how long were you with the Forest Service?

Totally, to answer your question, I was with the Forest Service twenty-nine years. I still had a job, and the fact is, the Forest Service transferred me up to Logan, and I worked half- to full-time and went to school full-time.

Why did they transfer you?

So I could get a degree and move up, because they liked the work I did.

And what kind of subjects or degree was it in Logan that fit you for a higher position with the Forest Service?

I came out with a degree in range management.

In other words, you received your salary while you went to college?

Well, for what I worked, yes, in the wintertime and summertime both. I received so much an hour in the wintertime, for the

time I worked—not for while I was going to school, but for the time I worked. I worked my schedule out so that I worked so many hours a day and went to school so many hours a day.

And you would come back to Austin?

No, no, we lived in Logan, Utah.

So this was the U.S. Forestry, and they could transfer your work there?

Right.

Okay, so we're not going to stay much there, because that's not Lander County. But just bring me through. Did you go full-time to school?

Yes.

And then you worked Christmas vacation and summers?

Uh-huh.

And you were able to manage?

Yes, we did real well. Toni got a job there as a postmistress in the college post office.

And where were all the kids?

They were there. My parents moved there with us, and they watched the kids in the daytime, the ones that weren't in school, or came home. It worked out real good.

I see, you had good coordination and organization. Was the intent always to go back to Austin after that degree?

Not really. I never thought they'd ever send me back, but they did!

So they found an opening for you to bring you back to Austin?

Uh-huh, I was the District Forest Ranger.

Is that the highest?

That was for there, it was, yes.

In that interim, did you get back to Austin at all?

Oh, we went back on visits, yes.

Did you sell the house when you were leaving? or did you keep it?

We sold it when we went.

There was no way to rent it and keep that?

No.

Oh, because you didn't know you were going to go back.

No.

I see.

It's very unusual for the Forest Service to send someone back to where they grew up.

So you were going to leave your options open, wherever they could send you.

Uh-huh.

So now, when you finished, you approached them and they said, "We have an opening in Austin"?

They called me and asked me if I'd be interested in coming back.

Valuable man!

[chuckles] Yeah.

So now, in great detail, tell me, did they again arrange for a place for you to live?

They provided homes. We have to pay so much a month rent on it.

Was it their home?

The Forest Service owned them.

And did you have more than four children by then?

No, we had four.

And they were getting bigger.

Yeah.

So then you came back to Austin, and were there many changes in that short interval?

It wasn't the booming town it was when we left!

All of a sudden?

There were a lot of new people there, we made a lot of good friends. I got involved with the Lions Club and ended up as president of it for a year. I also worked with the local PTA. They were having problems with the school board, which was in Battle Mountain, of course. They wanted me to be the spokesman for it, and I told them I'd do it, but they had to let me speak. And so they'd go in a group, but we had some real good things, and it ended up finally that they got a new school out of it.

So you were contributing to the community.

We tried.

And tell me about your work. Did you still work in the same region of the Toiyabe Forest in Kingston?

Yeah, I worked the same region, only this time I was the boss. [chuckles]

Describe what that job as the District Forest Ranger was, compared to the other position.

It was a lot better-paying! [laughter] I mean, the Forest Service job was. They took me out of there a lot of times to fight forest fires in other areas: Idaho, Utah, California...

So they were putting you in danger.

I spent one Thanksgiving in California, out of Los Angeles, on a big forest fire.

Oh my gosh!

Went up into Idaho, what they called the "Ten Sleep" fire, which was very huge. But I was on a Class A fire team with the Forest Service, and they sent me all over. They'd send us out when they couldn't handle it locally.

In the degree that you took, did they train you in that, and how to handle major fires?

Well, they trained us in that as we went along, working for the Forest Service on fires. I'd had a lot of experience, though. The fact is, when we lived in Austin, I was a member of the volunteer fire department.

Did you have to put out fires with the volunteer fire service?

Oh yes. Yeah, we helped. Those were mostly buildings and so on.

And besides the forest fires, what were some of your other major responsibilities now?

Well, making sure that people are not running livestock on the range that weren't permitted.

How did you do that? Did you have to ride a horse?

Oh yeah, I rode most of the time.

That sounds exciting! That sounds like more fun than fighting fires.

I used to get up at three o'clock in the morning, go to the office and do my paperwork. By seven o'clock I'd eat breakfast be on my way and get back at ten, eleven o'clock at night.

Oh my gosh!

[to wife] That wasn't unusual, was it Honey?

You more than earned...How come you had to work so many hours?

I just liked the work, and if something had to be done, I got out there and did it.

Now when you said you had to watch that animals didn't go on the wrong range, tell me some of the ranges, some of the ranches, or some of the lands where you covered it, since I'm familiar, kind of, with the ranches there.

Well it was the Toiyabe Mountain Range down to about Mosquito Crick [Creek], down in that area.

Did you ever find...

Oh yeah, I had to do some trespassing and so on to make people into believers. But that was one of the reasons—they told me after I got there—that they wanted me back, because they knew I would be able to handle it.

Because you worked on a ranch, you rode horses, you were a cowboy.

But I left with some really good friends there. A few people had their feelings hurt. That was a hard thing to do, was to trespass somebody.

Especially if it was someone that you knew.

Well, yeah. But the thing was, I told somebody that one day, and he said, “You know what, Don? I like to treat people like I like to be treated. But you know, some people, that’s the only way they like to be treated!” So maybe I felt a little better about it. But it was a good experience. We loved it there.

Sounds wonderful. Did you still go summers with the family to the mountain and stay in the ranger’s cabin?

Occasionally. We couldn’t go that much.

You were too busy?

Yeah.

That’s what happens when you’re the boss!

I had to be in Austin at the station when I was there.

Now during that period were there changes in Austin? Did some of the mining stop?

Yes, it had. It was a pretty good-sized little town. There were a lot of ranchers around there, and they had children in school and so on. I was quite active in the basketball program. The fact is, I coached the basketball team one year.

Is that a high school program?

Yes.

So you kept real, real busy. Was there a Mormon church there at that time?

Well, I guess we could say there was, because we held services in our home, and we got approval. It was kind of funny because we were half-way between Ely, which was Nevada Stake, and the Reno Stake, and neither one of them wanted us, for some reason. And finally Cyril Shank of Fallon here was the bishop and he said, “I’ll take ’em.” So that’s when we held the first meetings out there and so on.

In your home in Austin? You mean that was the only one in the whole area, that they had to travel so far?

Yes.

And they traveled from Ely?

No, no, the Church has stakes and they had a stake in Ely and they had a stake in Reno.

None in Fallon?

Yeah, that was part of the Reno Stake. And Austin was half-way between everything, about. And they didn’t think it would be worth doing anything with. But it was funny, we ended up, there was only one other family

there that were partially active in the LDS Church, about four or five, but we ended up as high as thirty-some in our little home every Sunday.

Were the Youngs there at that time?

No, they weren't, they came later.

They were there in the forties.

They came after we left.

I see, because she was taking her children back to school, that's right, to stay within the Church. So you were active in that. It sounds like not a dull moment. What else was happening in Austin? Anything else? During that period were the roads already paved?

Yes.

Everything was in. Were the rodeo grounds in yet?

Yes, they had the rodeo grounds.

And they were having the weekend rodeos?

Uh-huh. They had those before we left to go to college, in fact.

Any highway construction going on?

Yes, they constructed the new highway out through Cold Springs, instead of going over Carroll Summit all the time, which made it a lot nicer in the wintertime, getting back and forth.

For those that don't know, where did that start, in relationship to Austin, to the highway going through Austin?

It started about three miles below Austin and went from there clear across to Eastgate where it picked up the road again.

Going towards Kingston?

No, going towards Fallon.

And so they were creating a new road?

Yeah they did, they put it in there. That's the road we use now.

Ah, okay, I've been on that road a lot. They have good roads here. Where did the construction people stay when all that was going on?

They stayed around town, most of them. They had some people stay out where their construction camp was, but most of them did a lot of business in Austin.

Where was the construction camp?

It was below Austin a ways.

So that brought another kind of people in.... road and highway people who came in.

Right.

And how long was that going on?

I think about eighteen months, as I recall.

Oh, a long time. Did that bring more people into Austin, because of the highway, that made it easier to drive in from Fallon from this direction? Or on the other hand, did it make more people come to Fallon for their medical needs instead of going somewhere else?

They always did come to Fallon, or Reno—they never did go to Ely, very few of them.

When you were there, how did you cope with medical problems, because I don't know, was there a doctor then? there's no doctor now.

No, there wasn't a doctor then. There was at one time—Austin had a couple of different doctors.

So what did you do if you needed medical help?

We came to Fallon or Reno.

What if it was an emergency, with four kids?

They had an ambulance. I was an ambulance attendant. I drove or helped.

You had to do that too?

Yes.

Were there lots of emergencies?

There were quite a few, quite a few. We got called many times in the night, even, to take people out. We did take a lot of them, like transients, to Battle Mountain, instead of over here.

That's always been a problem there, hasn't it? Still is.

Yes, it has.

So when you were there, that didn't change. Did they have a visiting nurse when you were there? Now they have a once-a-week visiting nurse. Not when we were there.

Not even then?

Not then, no.

So I know a lot of people have to leave because of that.

Yeah, we'd probably move back to Austin if it wasn't for...

Yeah, because there's no medical care. I interview a lot of people, and the older people have to leave—people who have surgery have to leave for months, to recuperate somewhere else, so that's sad.

While we were there as a District Forest Ranger, Austin had a real good basketball team and a good track team. Our son was on the basketball team and track, and he was the Player of the Year for the state.

Wow! Did you follow him to games?

Did I! [laughter] I missed the first game because the Forest Service had a meeting in Reno and I told the supervisor then, "Hey, if it's a choice between going to his games and coming in here..." So after that, the Forest Supervisor planned it so that I could be home on Friday in time to go. The fact is, I drove the school bus for the team a lot.

When he won this award, where was the game played?

It was just for the whole year.

So there was a special award ceremony?

Yeah. The fact is, the Lions Club had a trophy program that they set up for the young boys for different things. And there was like the best free-throw shooter, the best rebounder, the most valuable player. There was about five or

six of them, I guess. But anyway, that year, he got four out of the five. We didn't pick 'em, the coach had to pick 'em, and the coach told me afterwards, he said, "He should have had all five of 'em because he was the best free-thrower too, but I couldn't embarrass him any more [laughs] by giving him all five of 'em!"

Now how old was he, and in what grade when he won these awards?

He was a senior. He turned eighteen. Then he also went into track, and he made two events.

An athlete!

Yeah, he was.

Now, where were some of the games held? Where did the school go?

Owyhee and Wells and Carlin and Battle Mountain, Eureka—you name it.

How often would you be going to these?

Every weekend. They played a lot of them in Austin, but the weekends they were....

Was it a family affair? Did everybody go?

Not always. She and I'd take turns taking—our girls were cheerleaders and they'd go different places too.

Oh my, so you had a very busy family life.

Oh yeah, it kept us goin'. We've tried to be real family-oriented.

And were the schools sufficiently good for the education you wanted for your children?

Yes, they were good.

When the kids were going through high school, what did teenagers do—besides the sports that your son did—what were some of the things the kids did?

Well, they'd get together at night, and they'd walk around or drive around town. Some of them would go and decide they'd want to drink and stuff. One thing about it, we had a rule that our children had to be in by a certain time. We never made a big to-do about it, but they were always there. They'd ask sometimes if they could go to someone's home, and they'd be home by ten o'clock they'd say, and maybe a half-hour later they'd be home, and I'd say, "What's the matter? What happened?" "Well," he said, "they started drinking so we just..."

Was that because there wasn't much to do? What was there for teenagers to do? There were no movies, right?

They could keep busy if they wanted to. Our kids didn't seem to have any problems.

Did they have a recreation center where the kids could go to congregate? Did they have an ice cream parlor? Did they have a dance?

They had dances.

Where kids could congregate in the evenings? How long did you stay with the Forest Service in Austin?

Five years. Then I left there, and they transferred me back to Wall, South Dakota. I was there for seven years, and then we transferred to Laramie, Wyoming, and that's where I retired, July 1, 1983.

Did you request transfers?

I just told them I was available, because it was a promotion.

I see, so there was a promotion and you were willing to go.

Yes.

So when you left Austin in 1971, how old were the kids by then?

Well, Curtis was graduating from high school—we came back for that in Austin. Valerie, our youngest, went to school and graduated at Wall, South Dakota, High School. Valerie was a freshman when we left Austin.

How did the kids feel about leaving?

They thought it was fine—they transferred several times while we were in the Forest Service, and they liked it.

So there was no...

Yeah.

And how did you both feel about it?

Well, we looked forward to it. We made up our mind that no matter where they sent us that we would like it before we got there, and we always did.

So you had positive thinking.

We always did.

And you were happy all being together, and making a living. So then what brought you to Fallon?

Well my parents, Walter and Lydia Schmittlein, their health was very poor. Our daughter, Cherie, who lived here—Cherie Keele—had been taking care of them, but she had eight children, so we decided we'd better come back here and help take care of my parents. My dad died in May of 1984 and Mom died Christmas day of 1984.

And when did you come back to Fallon?

We came back the first of December 1983.

So this is your home now?

Right. We've been here since 1984, in this home.

Is there anything else, going back to Lander County—because that's what this project is—before we end this interview?

I still go back there fishing.

Oh you do?! Do you go to the Kingston area?

Yeah, I fished there a week ago Monday.

Oh! Do you see changes?

Yes, now there's only five fish allowed in Kingston, and it used to be ten.

Is that so that you don't deplete the stock of the fish, because more and more people are fishing?

I think so. The people from Las Vegas come up there and they just crowd that canyon every weekend.

Don't you think Round Mountain does too, since that has grown tremendously?

Probably, yes.

So you do go back. Any other changes that you've observed?

Well, the housing development. When I was growing up it was an alfalfa hay ranch.

You mean where the Forest Service now stands?

No, right there at the mouth of Kingston Canyon, they have that big housing development there.

For general population?

Yeah.

I see.

They've got homes scattered all over up there. It's changed an awful lot. And the Gilman place. See, my folks owned the Gilman place, which was an alfalfa ranch.

Did they sell it to the new owners?

Youngs owned part of it. They don't own the Gilman, but they own two of the places that we owned. The wild meadow down at the bottom of the valley, and the place where they live.

So Kingston, that area has grown, hasn't it?

Yes.

So you always feel like it's a little bit of home there?

Oh yes. It's always nice. My parents are buried at Kingston, in the cemetery. That's where we plan on being buried too.

So then that really is home.

Uh-huh.

Was the Mormon church built during your time in Austin?

Yes.

So you saw that happen too.

Well, let's put it this way, we bought an old home there and remodeled it, and that's where we held church. And that happened up until just a few years ago and they built the new church there then.

Was that on your property?

Part of it used to be, yes.

Oh, I see. So where you held it in your home, part of that is where the new church is built?

No, our home—we held it at the upper end of town, that home of Frank's I told you about.

Yes, that one over there.

The home down below we lived in, but my uncle sold it to the Church after he bought it from us when we left Austin.

Oh, okay, so it's in the same location.

Uh-huh.

Anything else on Austin before we end the interview?

It was a good place to live—still would be if it wasn't so far from doctors and hospitals. We'd go back in a minute if it wasn't for that.

Well, I hope you can visit it and still enjoy it.

We do. We still have a lot of dear friends up there.

Well on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you for contributing to it with information that is important to the total picture of Austin, and so thank you. After we ended the interview and we were chatting, you told me a few more things that I insist you put on the tape. So this is a post script.

I wrote the Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Service part of the power line that brought AC power into Austin, Smoky Valley, et cetera. I also issued the Special Use Permit for the now—existing cemetery at Kingston Canyon. My parents are buried there, and that's where we will be buried and my brother and his wife and our daughter and son-in-law have desired to be there. We have our plots staked out up there.

Is that in a little cemetery as you're coming into Austin?

No, this is out at Kingston Canyon.

Is there a cemetery, or is it on private land?

It's on Forest Service land. We have a Special Use Permit for it, which gives them a hundred years or so, and then they renew it if it...

I see. On that Environmental Impact Statement, what kind of preparation did you have to do to write that, because I know those are very complex issues.

Knowledge of the area did help me a lot, because I already was aware of it. But we

had to go out and meet with BLM and other agencies and then decide on where it was going. And then I had to write up why we should do it and what the stipulations were for it to come through there.

That's not an easy thing to do.

I ended up writing a lot of those in the Forest Service.

I hope your name is on them! Usually they don't give credit. Anything else that you've thought about that you might...

No, that about does it.

I thank you so much for contributing, and thank you for loaning me some photographs that we'll be able to add to the transcript. This is the end of the interview.

DONALD W. SCHMIDTLEIN PHOTOGRAPHS



Schmidtlein Family. Front, left to right: Frank Michael, George Washington, Lawrence Elbert, Amelia Elizabeth, Walter Alden. Back, left to right: Jessie, Charles Adam. Schmidtlein's Kingston Ranch.

(Original photograph, "Lander 214", from Nevada Historical Society)



Sophomore class, Austin, 1940. Don Schmidtlein, first person, top left.

(Original photograph owned by Don Schmidtlein)



Donald Schmidtlein, high school senior, basketball team.

(Original photograph owned by Don Schmidtlein)

DONALD W. SCHMIDTLEIN

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TONI SCHMIDTLEIN

PREFACE

Toni Schmidtlein, recovering from a stroke, was present during Don Schmidtlein's interview. When we were visiting after the interview, Toni was telling me with such enthusiasm about her brief period of life with Don in Austin, I knew her recollections would add a new dimension and different perspective to their shared experiences there. Toni's vivid memory, her enthusiasm, sense of humor and continued love for Austin is evident in this brief interview.

Don and Toni had a whirlwind courtship, married January 1949 two months after they met in Utah, then traveled by bus to Austin to Don's family. After her initial shock at the town and saloons, and drives with Don all around the countryside, she fell in love with Austin and the region.

Toni gives vivid descriptions of the town: the markets, businesses; the "old men of the town" on benches whittling and smoking their pipes. She recalls the fun of eating pine nuts from cones roasted in a fire;

soaking in a little hot spring out of Austin; sleigh riding down Austin's steep hills in the winter and picnics at Stokes Castle. Fourth of July celebrations and Gridley Days with parades and barbecues are still vivid memories and bring a glow to her beautiful face.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Ione "Toni" Schmidtlein. She is the wife of Don Schmidtlein who has been interviewed. The date is June 8, 1994, and the interview is at the Schmidtlein home at 3455 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada.

Toni, we finished with Don's interview, but I know that there's a lot of things you can tell me with a different perspective as a woman, seeing Austin later than he did, and so we're going to interview you now. First give us your full name, where and when you were born.

Toni Schmittlein: My name is Ione Warner Schmittlein. I like to be, and have been called for many, many years, Toni. I was born in Heyburn, Idaho—it's a little small town that nobody's heard of. [chuckles]

What was the date?

I was born May 8, 1931.

Where did you meet Don?

We met in Logan, Utah.

When you met in Utah, how long after did you marry, and what date?

We were married two months and one day later, January 7, 1949.

[mock astonishment] Shocking! [chuckles]

Well, it's kind of lasted—we've just had our forty—fifth wedding anniversary.

Oh my, that's wonderful. Now, because this is a Lander County project, I want to know when you first set eyes on Lander County.

Well, we came in March of 1949 from Logan. We came in by bus to Battle Mountain, so I saw that. And then it was dark at night and we came into Austin. Don's dad had come to Battle Mountain to meet us, and the funny thing was, I couldn't see any of Austin, and when I got up the next morning, I thought, "Oh, my gosh, he's brought me to the dropping-off place of the whole world!" I could not even *believe* it! And then that very day we went down—he was going to take me down to have an ice cream cone. And it was so funny because I had never been in bars or anything like that. He took me down to get an ice cream

cone, we walked in, and here was this man who'd been drinking all night. It was one of his best friends, as a matter of fact. [laughs] And I just about died! I thought, "What is he doing, taking me in a bar?!" But half of that bar was an ice cream parlor, and everybody knew—there was not a line drawn—but everybody knew where the bar ended and the ice cream parlor began. It was really quite interesting.

Now which building? Where was this ice cream parlor and bar? What's the place?

Now it's just a saloon there, but it's on the corner of...don't know the names of the streets. Virginia Hill, and it's right across from the Chevron gas station. And that's where it was.

Was it the International Hotel?

No, it was called the Black Cat at that time.

Oh, the Black Cat, okay.

Yes, and it was quite an interesting place. And the ice cream was delicious [laughs] but I was really shocked. At first I thought, "Oh my gosh, what will my mother think?!" [laughs] Going into a den of iniquity! But it was really, really quite an interesting place.

Now was this when you were first married, before you had children?

Yes.

And where did you stay?

We stayed with his parents for a while until we could find a house to rent.

Was that out at Kingston?

No, they had moved to town by then, and they lived just one block above town, so you could see the old roofs and all these things. Some of them were falling in.

So they weren't in Kingston any more?

No, his parents had sold the ranches while he and his brother were in the service during World War II when there was not anyone to help them. So they sold them and moved into town.

So you stayed in that house. Describe that house.

Well it was an interesting house. It was, as I said, a block above the town. It was long. It went back into the hillside. In fact, they had, what would you call it? A cellar, but it was cool because it was in the rock, probably above an old mine shaft. But they could keep their food...Of course they had a refrigerator, but they could keep their food in there too, because it stayed nice and cold [laughs] because it was bare rock and so forth. It was kind of interesting. It was a nice house there. It was a different one for me, because it was like you'd call a "railroad apartment," you know, that they go from one room to the next to the next.

On this first visit, how long were you there in Austin?

Oh, let's see, we were there several years.

So when you went for that ice cream cone, did you begin to wonder if you did the right thing, marrying and coming to Austin? How did you feel?

Well, I was so much in love I didn't really care. [laughs] But it was totally different. I had

never been to a western town. Although I was raised in Idaho, but it was totally different.

So now I want to know—we're going to ignore what Don was doing—I want to know how old were you when he brought you there?

I was seventeen, going on eighteen.

Oh, you were just a little, young kid.

Yes.

Oh my.

But you know, it's been worth it.

And so tell me how, starting very slowly from your first arrival, what did you do?

Well mostly we just...

Not we what did you do days he was working? What did you do?

Don has a sister, and I went with her, although she was in school. But I would go downtown, I would do things with his mother, and one of the really interesting...

What would you do? When you say "do things," it's such a little town.

Well, you know, you'd do the household-type things, and then you'd look at other things to do. And of course I'm a voracious reader, so I'm sure I read something.

No library there, was there?

I don't think there was one at that time, but you borrowed books from other people, you know.

So you kind of helped with the household?

Yes.

Describe Don's parents.

They were really lovely people. They were so sweet to me from the word go. Of course I had a little girl, and they were so...

Oh, did you have a little girl?

Yes.

Wait a minute. When you were seventeen, and you were just married?

I had been married before and divorced.

Oh, and you had a little girl.

I married at fifteen.

Oh, I didn't know that. So you came with a little girl.

Yes.

How old was the little girl?

She was a year-and-a-half old, and she absolutely *loved* them, and they loved her. And it was so nice. I was worried about how it would be, but they were just kindness itself. You couldn't ask for greater people. And his uncle, they just thought I was great too. So everything worked out well from that aspect.

Did you live in the Schmidtlein home the whole time you were there?

No, we moved to a little house up on... The streets didn't have names then. We

had this little house that had one bedroom and so forth, and it was really a cute little house—had a porch on front, long, sloping lawn and so forth. And it was really nice. We enjoyed ourselves, our neighbors were great. They taught my daughter to eat out of a catalog, and she'd come home and say she wasn't hungry, she'd already eaten. [laughs]

So you were busy with a little girl.

Yes, she kept me busy. And I did sewing. I had started sewing at the age of seven or eight years old, and so I sewed everything she wore, except her underpants. Now they do even that! But I didn't do that. [laughs]

Did Don take you out to show you where the ranch was?

Oh yes. And at that time they did not have the highway that goes by. We had to drive past every farm. And it was a very interesting, gravel road. It was really interesting to see all those places. And Kingston was such a *beautiful* place then. It was a working ranch, still, at that time. We enjoyed that, and of course going by the home place with the old house and everything. And it was really nice. You know, it was just enjoyable. He took me all around the country, and introduced me to all the places in the valley, and everything, and I just thoroughly loved it. I just fell in love with it, that's all there is to it.

What's your little girl's name?

Her name was Darlyn.

Oh, that's pretty. And so how long, that first time, did you stay there in Austin?

I think we were only there a few months. Then we went to Gabbs and came back to Austin [laughs] and stayed with his parents again. Don went to work on a mine in Salt Lake and left me there in Austin.

Oh, and you stayed there with them?

Uh-huh.

Was that beginning to be your home?

Yes.

Did you like that?

Yes, we did.

How did you do your marketing? Did you climb the hills?

Well, they had two markets there, believe it or not, there, and it just was down one road, although we were up on the hill above it. But there were two markets. They had a greater business district than they do now—a lot bigger.

Were there more people there?

Well I don't know that there were that many people, but they sure must have eaten a lot of food, because [chuckles] it kept two grocery stores going. There were more people, I'm sure, because some of the houses that used to be are no longer in existence. It's very sad, I always think that Austin, I hate for it to lose its heritage. And they sold off all the things. You know, the International Hotel was the one that used to be in Virginia City. And they sold off, later. At that time it was still there. They sold off the porch that went around it and the swinging doors that went to the bar and all

these things at the International. It just broke my heart, because I love old things. And when I first went there, there was still the huge old livery stable that was there on Main Street. It was not in use, of course, except by youngsters who wanted to get into mischief. All the main street was totally full—there were no empty spots at all. And there were, of course, quite a few businesses that aren't there now.

And they had a bank that they don't have now.

Oh yes, they had a nice bank which was next to the saloon. [laughs] The saloon/ice cream parlor! [laughs] And it was just delightful. I loved it, and you would have too, because the whole main street was full of buildings. There were no empty spaces, like teeth missing from someone's mouth. And I remember there was a Dory's Store, which was a dry goods store. And they had, of course, tons of Levis. I wish we could get 'em for that price now! They were like four dollars. That was a fun place to go because they had little knickknacks beside their clothing and different things. That would take a good part of your day to go down there. I found out that there was a girl who thought she was going to marry my husband when she graduated from school that year. And she never liked me.

I wonder why. [laughter]

And they still had shivarees in those days, and so when we came back to Austin we had been married less than two months, I think, and they had a shivaree for us. I had never seen one, I was totally shocked. I didn't know what they were, but boy it was really something!

So they put you in the wheelbarrow?

No, they didn't do that. They came to your home and you had to furnish drinks for everybody that came. It was a real eye-opener for me, because I wasn't into this drinking and that kind of thing, and I was totally shocked.

Were you a Mormon then?

Yes, I was raised that way—my husband was not.

Oh, so that was why.

But he was raised that way, and he had to explain everything to me. [laughs] But it was really—Austin just gripped me by the heart and never has let go.

Isn't that wonderful?!

One thing that I really thought was quite interesting too, was there was the old men of the town, who always came and set on benches by the grocery stores and would whittle and smoke their pipes and whatever. But it was an institution to see them sifting there. They had *their* place. I don't think anyone would have dared to take it! [laughs] But it was really interesting, and they had a lot of history to tell, you know, that they could tell you about different things. And they were very friendly. Nobody treated me like an outsider. I was always treated just like I belonged to Austin, and I do—still do. [laughs]

It sounds like you do. And I'll bet Don's family loved you and your little baby.

Well they treated me just marvelously, they really did. And there were a couple next door who had a little girl the same age, and so it worked out just marvelously—Bert and Lilian Gandolfo have a daughter the very

same age as mine. But her daughter was shy and mine was more outgoing. And so she got acquainted really fast. One of the things that I remember too was we would take rides in the evening. And oh, he'd go up some of the canyons that branch off, and there were all these old cabins, and I thought, "Oh, the history they could tell." And I was after Don *constantly* to let me stop and go in this one old cabin that still had most of its walls. It had no roof or anything.' And finally he consented to stop long enough to let me go in and look at that. And just as I got up to the place he said, "Oh by the way, Honey, you must watch for snakes." And I almost died! I mean, if he hadn't said that...And as I got up to the doorway of it, here were two black lizards sunning on a rock. I'd never seen black lizards in my whole life, and they were just lying there in the sun. But I always think about the people who'd lived there and wondered who they were and what they had done and that kind of thing.

So you were history-minded.

Yes, I like that kind of thing. And it was really just a totally enjoyable period of my life.

Were you there when the beautiful Texas yellow roses came in?

Oh yes. And we have right out in our yard a great big group of them.

Did you bring it?

Where the LDS church is, they bought the property that we owned when our second little girl was born that lives here. They were going to cover them over with dirt to make their area bigger for parking and that kind of thing. And so we asked if they would mind if we got some of the roses, and so we brought

them home. And when that thing blooms, the whole bush is totally covered. And they spread very easily. I have another piece of Austin to look at when I look out the window. But when Austin would bloom, oh, in the spring, that whole...Everywhere in Austin there were great big thickets of roses all over town. And they would bloom and just be the most glorious sight you've ever seen. And I assume they still do, but there aren't as many of them as there used to be.

On your first honeymoon visit to meet Don's family, how long did you and Don and your daughter stay that time?

Well we were only there a few months. I can't really remember exactly how many at the moment. We were there then when I was expecting our second daughter. We had to go to Fallon to see a doctor. I will say, though, that while we were living there, I had to have a surgery.

The first time?

I think it was the second time. And it was after our first daughter was six months old. I remember there was still a doctor in Austin. But he wouldn't handle maternity things, and you had to catch him in the morning when he was still sober. [laughs] So that was quite an interesting thing, because I had a surgery for an appendectomy and they removed part of my ovary duct. But the doctor said, "You can have the doctor in Austin take out the stitches." And so Don said, "We've got to get him early while he's still sober." [laughter] Really nice man, but...

Now when you had to have this appendectomy, was this the first visit when you were there with your little girl?

No, this is the second visit.

On the second visit, is this before you had your second daughter?

After, just after.

Let's get you back there. You were going to have your second daughter. Where did you go for your medical care?

Well we went to Fallon, of course. Had a marvelous doctor there who cared for us. I had to stay three weeks before she was born because she was starting to come and then changed her mind, and the doctor wouldn't let me go home. And it was in July, it was so hot in Fallon I thought I'd died and went to the wrong place!

Did you stay in the hospital?

No, he arranged for me to stay with a lady there—the doctor arranged for me to stay with this lady.

Where was your first girl?

TS. She was in Austin with my mother-in-law. Of course my little sister-in-law helped take care of her.

That must have been hard!

That was the hardest thing for me. I just couldn't stand it. I'd cry and cry, because I missed my husband and my baby. She was not quite three years old, and it was very hard to go and leave her. But the doctors in Fallon were very—I had an *excellent* doctor.

So then you took the little baby back to Austin?

Yes, before the doctor wanted me to. I didn't realize when he said I could "go home,"

I thought he meant Austin, and he meant Fallon! He wanted me to stay a couple of weeks, but I didn't, I went right back to Austin. He almost died when he found out I wasn't there! [laughs]

So this shows the hardship. So you went back home, and then shortly after that you needed surgery? Six months later you needed surgery?

Yes.

You had to go back to Fallon?

Yes.

So it shows the hardship when you don't have sufficient medical care.

Well, it's really, really difficult, because you have to have care, that's all there is to it.

So how long, with the two little girls did you stay then in Austin?

We stayed until Cherie, our second daughter, was almost... We left when she was eight months old.

While you were there with both of the children, anything more on Austin that you can add to it? Is there anything else?

At that particular time I was just so excited that I finally had another baby that I don't remember the other things that went on. Well, one time, before the second baby was born we went out and had pine nuts. And I'd never seen this done before, and I haven't seen it since. But they built a fire, a bunch of young people asked us to go with them.

Where did they do this?

We went up on Austin Summit somewhere. And they built a fire and put the cones right in the fire, and they opened up and were cooked that way. It was *absolutely fabulous*! Oh, it was so good.

It opened up?

You eat the nuts. You break the shell on the nuts and eat the meat inside. And it was so fun, and young people used to do things like that quite a bit.

That sounds like fun. What else did the young kids do?

I'm not sure. You know, at that point you're on your honeymoon, you're so in love. Oh, but a little later, that was a little later. The young people... There was a hot springs. We used to go out to the Tavern. That was an interesting place to go.

What was the Tavern?

The Tavern was a little business establishment that was how far?

DON Twelve.

Twelve miles out of Austin.

Which direction?

Towards Smoky Valley.

East.

Towards Smoky Valley?

Yes.

What was the Tavern?

It was a place where you could eat. Kids went out there a lot to play games. They had pool and different things like that for them to play. The Tavern is a bar and restaurant, but they had also a game room where a lot of the young people would play.

Like pool?

Pool and things like that. The people who owned it at that time, she was the most *fabulous* cook, and you could have steaks that would melt in your mouth. Oh! it was just... And everything was homemade. There was nothing shipped-in and so forth. But that was one of the highlights, if you'd go out to the Tavern. A lot of people went out on Friday or Saturday night to have a lovely dinner and so forth, and it was really enjoyable.

Did they have music there for dancing?

Well, only a jukebox. I don't think they ever had live music—they might have. But over the years, I've rather forgotten. One of the other things that they did was this little hot springs that was out on the road toward Monitor. They eventually built up a couple of nice swimming pools out there, but I understand that the state made them close them down and fill them in or something.

Health regulations?

Yeah, which I thought was sad, because there were so few things there for young people to do. But boy it was nice! The water was so warm. You'd just get in there and soak.

Did you ever get in there?

Oh yes, I did! I loved it.

Did you bring your little girls?

I think so, but you know, it has been a few years. [laughs]

What did kids do in the wintertime?

Well they had sledding mostly. They probably had other things that I don't know about. They used to go down Virginia Hill on their sleds and right onto the main street.

Dangerous!

But of course they had the sheriff or whoever it was would make sure there was no traffic going when the children were coming down off the hill.

Okay, it was regulated.

Right. Another place that they used to sleigh from was from the school. And it was a combined high school and junior high and grade school—all the children.

Is that the big brick building up on the hill?

Yes, all the children went to school there. And they had a lot of fun. There's a sloping hill off from there, and they had the little round dishes, plus the sleds. And boy, they'd come a whooping off there like you couldn't believe! And then there was some kind of athletic field down there where they had to level out after they came off so that they didn't get hurt or anything. They did have a lot of fun doing things like that. I know there were other things, but I can't think of them.

When you first saw your kids doing that were you kind of scared? I think I'd be, watching them go down those hills.

Well, I tell ya', I tried *not* to watch!
[laughter]

That's the best policy!

You know, one of the women in Austin told me some of the things she did as a teenager there, and I said, "I'm sure glad that parents don't know what their kids do, because they'd have a heart attack!" [laughter]

Did you get back to Austin very much over the years to see the changes?

Well we always went back periodically. It draws me like a magnet because of my love for it. But the thing that made me so sad was to see the deterioration of the buildings and the ones that weren't there. We used to go out to Stokes Castle and have picnics. That's something that our children *loved* when they were small, was to go to the castle. And they keep telling *their* children about it, "Oh, you must see the castle." But unfortunately people have really destroyed a lot, and that's so sad. But that was something that we loved to do. Maybe just on the spur of the moment I'd say, "Honey, let's go have a picnic out at the castle," and we would. And the children just absolutely loved it. Well, I did too. And I have always had this silly dream that I would *love* to see so much of it restored. I'd look at the castle and think, "Oh, if we could make a supper club there or something, it would be so lovely." And the history that goes with it! Someone needs to write it up and have it available for anyone who wants to know what it's like, because it really is an integral part of Austin's history. The man who built it, the reason that he built it and so forth, are very, very interesting to us—the railroad being built as it came to Austin. And there was still the old... Well, you couldn't call it a roundhouse,

it was square—but where the engines used to come. All that was still there when we came.

When you were there, did they have that little train that went from Battle Mountain to Austin?

Well, the train had been discontinued by the time we were married. But part of the tracks were there—not many. But the little roundhouse was still there. It was a favorite place for youngsters to play also. [laughs] There were a lot of places.

When you were there, did they celebrate Gridley Days?

Oh yes, they did.

What were some of the things they did on Gridley Days?

I know they had a parade, and it seems like. ... I think they culminated in a barbecue. And it was a lot of fun. There's one story I'll just have to tell you: One of the parades they had, there was a man wearing a barrel [laughs] and he was just walking down the street and all of a sudden his barrel fell, and they said all the old ladies put their hands over their eyes...

You mean he was naked under it?! Oh, they thought he was. [laughs]

They *thought* he was! [laughs] And they said all of the women put their hands with their fingers open so they could see. [laughs] And I thought that was just really hilarious, because there were these staid older ladies who were putting their hands so they could peek at the man in the barrel! [laughs] But they used to have parades a lot more than

they do now. Their Fourth of July was a *great big* celebration, *always*.

I was just going to ask you that—on the tip of my tongue. How did they celebrate it when you were there?

Well we had the parade and a rodeo and a barbecue, and it was very, very nice—well attended.

Did they have fireworks?

Yes, they did. That's one of the things, as I said, that's sad, because so many of the young people, or the not-so-young that are living there, they don't remember, they don't even know that Austin used to do such interesting things. And the whole town would be crowded with people because people loved to come to the Austin celebrations.

Uh-huh! I read in the earlier days where everyone from Battle Mountain would go to Austin for the Fourth of July.

And people from Eureka would come over there too, yes. It was really a lot of fun, and the people, they really got into it. I can't think of the word I want, but you know they didn't just say "ho-hum."

They weren't blase about it.

That's right. That's exactly the word I wanted. And because they really did celebrate. And there were some women, each of them had their specialties, like who made the best baked beans. And they had homemade pies and things like this. And potato salad—you *knew* who made the best ones. [laughs] And it was really good. I was thinking of Kittie Bonner, who is dead now, but she was a town

figure. I'm sure someone has told you about her already. She was just always there and always doing things for other people, and just the sweetest person you'd ever want to see. In fact, she was a constable at one time. They had her being the constable. I can't remember what her specialty was that she made for the Fourth of July. Quite a few of the women had specialties and they would bring them out for the Fourth of July.

Was it like a big potluck? Or did they sell it? Or was it a potluck picnic?

I think they asked the ones who did the best job. [laughs]

Did your family participate in the Fourth of July?

Well, yes they did, and one year Don was the parade marshall, rode one of his favorite horses. And our little children had a forest service type thing. They had some burned brush and some green to show what happened. And they took first place in the parade that year.

Where was the twigs and brush? What was it in?

It was in a little red wagon that belonged to the children, and they really enjoyed being in the parade. They've never, in fact, have forgotten that they were in that parade in Austin.

And they won a prize?

And they won first prize. It was twenty-five dollars or something like that.

How old were they then? Were they real little?

They were small.

Did you get pictures?

Unfortunately, we didn't.

If you did, I'd love to add that.

But it was just really a special time, and the kids still talk about it. It was interesting, because our son, when he was here from... He wasn't at Okinawa then, he was in Southern California at one of the Marine bases there. But they came up with their family and they got to run in the races. It's changed now a lot, but they got to run the races, and their children took first place in every one they ran in—and so did their dad! [laughs] So our grandchildren are being initiated into things, although like I said it's not anything like it used to be. But they still are, because we talk about it so lovingly—even our grandchildren love Austin. We have one little grandson who used to *beg* to go with us whenever we had to go up there. We stopped at the Toiyabe Drive-In and he would have grilled cheese. Well after he had it once, then when the waitress come up, he says, "I'll have the usual." [laughs] And it was a different waitress! [laughs] But it was really darling. But they all love it too, because their roots are still in Austin.

Yes. Well, before we close this, is there anything else on Austin? You've shared a wonderful picture, so enthusiastically, and it's so appreciated. Is there anything else on Austin, before we close?

Well, I really can't think of anything right now, except that if they had a good doctor, we would be living there still, because we still love Austin.

I hope you can make some visits there.

Well, we go up frequently, and the fishing is so great. I don't fish, but my husband does.

You eat it! [laughs]

And I love to eat it. And if you can eat it—which I never get to do any more—but if you can eat it, with the fish cooked in a frying pan, out-of-doors, over a nice sagebrush fire and have potatoes and onions, you're living like a queen, I'll tell you! There's nothing like it. In fact, just last week, my sweetheart went up fishing and got a mess of fish, and oh, it was so good! We just really enjoyed it.

I just am so pleased that we could get your enthusiastic picture of Austin. So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, we thank you so much.

TOIN SCHMIDTLEIN PHOTOGRAPHS



DON AND TONI SCHMIDTLEIN, JUNE 8, 1994

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

TONI SCHMIDTLEIN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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LOMA SCHWIN

PREFACE

Loma Schwin's father, William Lewis Pearce, born in New Jersey in 1872, traveled across the United States with his family when he was three years old. They eventually settled in Austin, Nevada. William started working in mines when he was thirteen years of age to help support the family. He later went up to Silver City, Idaho to see about another job and met Jessie May Murray whose father was working there as a miner. They married, moved to Nevada, and eventually purchased a ranch near the mining camp of Kennedy. Loma was born in 1916, the third in a family of eight children. She describes life growing up on a ranch, doing everything from mowing hay with an old-fashioned mower and a team of horses, riding in the hills for cattle and horses, and herding sheep. Loma's dad built a little one-room school house and a succession of teachers lived with the Pearce family. When Loma was nineteen she married George William Schwin from Battle Mountain. They lived in tents at different mining camps for

several years during the winter, spending the summers at the Schwin ranch, Mill Creek, in Lander County. Their son, George, was born in 1943 and their daughter, Vera, in 1948. Loma rented a little house in Battle Mountain where the children completed their schooling. They would go back to the ranch weekends with all the groceries and clothes. This went on for years. The Schwins finally bought the land where the little house was and put the mobile home on the property where Loma still lives.

To help with expenses, Loma babysat, worked in homes, in the hospital as relief cook and in the Home Health Service. When the children were grown, Loma worked as a dispatcher at the sheriff's office. Her husband, still out on the ranch, was leasing Camp McCoy and mining gold. He would come into town several times a week. Then, due to poor health, he sold the ranch in 1972 and moved to town. Loma retired in 1979, the same year her husband died. She spends a great deal of time with her children and grandchildren, visits her sisters in Winnemucca, and enjoys reading.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Program, interviewing Loma Schwin at her home at 354 West Second Street. The date is August 20, 1993.

Good morning, Loma, I'm happy to be here to interview you this morning. Could you please tell us your full name?

Loma Schwin: Loma Schwin.

Where did you get the name Loma? It's unusual.

My mother took it from an application when a teacher wanted to come out to my ranch and teach.

It's a lovely name. And where and when were you born?

I was born in the mining camp of Kennedy, which was in Humboldt County at one time. Then later it's Pershing. It's now a deserted mining camp.

What was the date?

February 4, 1916.

Tell me a little bit about your grandparents. Can you tell me your paternal grandfather's name and where he was born?

My paternal grandfather was born in Cornwall, England.

Would you tell us his name?

He was William Lewis Pearce and he married Elizabeth [Roberts].

Can you tell me what your grandfather did in Cornwall, England?

No, I don't have that information. I know she met him there, and that's all.

When you say "she," are you talking about your grandmother on your father's side? Can you tell me her name and where she was born?

Yes, I'm talking about Elizabeth Roberts, and she was born in Pachuca, Mexico. She was the daughter of a mining engineer.

Now, was he a Mexican?

No. He was English and he was sent over there for a twenty-year stint to take care of a mine.

Was he married to a Mexican or an English woman—your great-grandmother?

He was married to an English girl.

And how did your grandfather meet your grandmother if she was born in Mexico and he was born in England?

At the time of the Revolution, my great-grandfather had to go back to England because the Mexicans wanted them out of there. She went to England and met her husband there. I don't know the details.

Now let's move to your mother's parents. Can you tell me your grandfather on your mother's side? His name and if you know where he was born.

My mother's father was Jacob Murray, and we think that he left Georgia and went to the Northwest. During that time the Civil

War broke out and they told him, "Join up or else!" He had to join the North, even though he was from the South.

What did he do?

He was working as a miner.

Working in the mine where?

In Idaho. I think it was Silver City, Idaho where they met.

Who was your grandmother on your mother's side?

Her name was Jane Clegg. All my mother's relatives came from the British Isles but I don't know too much about them.

Now tell me your father's name and where he was born.

My dad was William Lewis Pearce also, and he was born in Mine Hill, New Jersey. They left there when he was three years old, came across the United States—I believe partly in a wagon—and came eventually to Austin and Belmont area.

Do you know what time period that was? You said he was a little baby. Do you know when he was born approximately?

Yes. He was born on June 30, 1872.

So he came as a very little boy. Did he tell you much about his early years in Nevada?

That's one thing he didn't. It seems that the English people were very reluctant to talk too much about their pasts.

Tell us how and where they met.

He went up to Silver City, Idaho, from Austin at about age twenty-one, somewhere along that age and he met my mother there.

And would you tell us her name?

Her name was Jessie May Murray and she was raised in the Lake family. She was a stepdaughter to my grandmother's second husband. When my folks were married they moved to Nevada. For a while my father worked for his brother-in-law who had freight wagons hauling between Beowawe and Cortez. As I understand it, those wagons hauled freight, mail, and passengers. When he heard of a ranch for sale near the mining camp of Kennedy, he moved again. This time he had his own freight outfit to haul between Kennedy and Winnemucca. Two more children were born before I was expected in February 1916. The snow that year was belly-deep to horses. The team couldn't pull the wagon through the snow until two men, each on horseback, broke a trail so my mother could be taken to a registered nurse at Kennedy, where I was born.

Go back to your very earliest recollections as a child and tell us what it was like in this bustling household with all these children and describe your house.

It was crowded, that's what it was. [laughter] We had a large table in the dining room and we'd all just go in a line all around until we were all seated. But being my three older sisters were quite a little older than the rest of us, we weren't all home at the same time. I can't even remember my oldest sister being at home. She was married and gone. One had passed away when I was about four, and the third was married when I was seven.

When they were home, I suppose they were a great big help for your mother helping to take care of all of you?

Two were very good at helping our mother, but we were all outdoor children [chuckles] and we helped my dad a great deal.

That's interesting. First, I want to go back a little bit. Tell me about your mother. What kind of a woman was she and did she manage the household, but did she also participate in the ranch? Tell me a little about her as a person.

As a person, my mom was just simply a dear person. She loved Babies—otherwise, how could she stand eight of us?! [laughter] Anyway, she was too busy at the house. She raised turkeys at one time. She did everything she could to help; she worked hard. And eventually, I can remember in later years after many of the children had left home, she was even out pitching hay with the rest of us.

So, you said you helped your dad. What are your earliest memories of the kinds of work you did on the ranch?

Well, I've done everything from mowing hay with an old-fashioned mower and a team of horses. I've ridden in the hills to gather the horses for haying. I've ridden in the hills for cattle. I've also herded sheep. We did a little of everything. [laughter]

I want to know about your dad. You said he was English and he didn't share a lot of his past, but tell me about him as a person.

As a person he was very honest and worked hard and he was mostly a rancher because that pleased my mom, but he loved his mines and he loved his steam engines. That

was his whole life, but he had to give that up because [chuckles] she wanted to live on a ranch.

In other words, before he married, he was doing mining?

He was a very young man and he worked in the mine at thirteen years of age. When his father died, he worked in the Union Mine in Austin to support the family. Then, for whatever reason, he went up to Silver City to see about another job and he worked temporarily on the railroad before his marriage, too.

Did your mother come from a ranch family that she loved the ranch so much?

No. She lived in Silver City as far as I know.

So back to your work on the ran Tell me what time you got up, how many hours you worked, did you have time to be a child and play, or was your life mainly working on the ranch and all the chores?

No, we had it all pretty well organized. We did our chores, we didn't get up too early either, we were kind of lazy, [laughter] and my dad wasn't very strict, but he'd be up early. We played a great deal. We made our own toys and played. We even had carved out stick feet if you can imagine it, to play—we were horses. [laughs]

Now did you play just with your brothers and sisters or were there neighboring ranches with children?

There were neighboring ranches. The closest was three-and-a-half miles, and the others came from farther away to attend a

school at our ranch. We went through all eight grades there, and my brother and I were the only ones who had one year of high school. My dad hired a high school teacher and we took high school that year, but that's as far as our education went.

So in the family there was just one brother?

One brother, yes.

And what's the age difference between you and Lester?

Three-and-a-half years.

And you were younger?

Yes.

Now let's go back to the school, I want a little more detail. I know I heard that if there were a certain number of children, they had to supply a teacher on a ranch. Is that right?

Yes it is. I think it was five at that time, we had to have. But we had eleven at one time in a little one-room school.

Now, did they determine that your ranch, because there were more children there, was where the school would be located?

Because it was more centrally located is the reason they chose it.

Did they build a little school house?

Yes. My dad built it.

Oh, your dad built it?!

Yes.

Did he have to pay to build it?

Not that I know of. Possibly. The school district may have furnished it but I'm not sure. The building is still standing.

Now was that ever Lander County?

No.

When they sent the teachers out, you said one was named Loma?

Yes, but we didn't hire her.

Did the teachers live with you?

Yes they did. They paid thirty dollars a month and had a room to themselves, but we had no indoor bathroom, we had [laughs] very primitive accommodations.

How long did they stay?

Several of them came back for two or three years. We had, all-in-all, over twenty-four or twenty-five teachers.

Would they be the new ones getting experience and then they would come and go on to other places?

Some were very inexperienced. One I remember came and stayed less than a week [chuckles], went home in tears and never taught again. [laughter]

That's funny! [laughter] Now your very earliest recollections. This was a one-room school house?

Yes.

So that you were all different ages and grades?

Yes.

Do you have any recollections of what a typical school day was like?

Oh yes, I liked the school days. We had at one time all eight grades there when we had the eleven, and we learned from each other. We really did learn and advanced much easier than they do nowadays.

And of course there weren't many in the classroom so the teachers could give individual attention?

Well, some way they managed it. I don't know.

And I suppose if your mind was more curious, you could learn the higher grade work.

That's right, we did, and it was much easier that way. My brother went on to own his own radio station.

What were your favorite chores and favorite part of the ranch life?

Well, I don't know. I don't think I was all that interested in the chores. I did love the haying and I'm still fond of that: To bring the hay from the fields to the stack was really a joy to me.

Now not being a farm girl, I've learned that there's all kinds of hay. I guess whatever's growing can be the hay.

We had alfalfa.

And you had cattle?

Yes we had cattle for a while then my dad switched to sheep. We would go up in the hills

in the summer with the sheep, and my brother-in-law would take care of the ranch. We really did alright with the sheep. I liked them.

I read there was controversy between the ranchers that had the sheep and had the cattle, that some felt the sheep were eating the feed down to the nub and taking it away from cattle. Was there any controversy in the area where your ranch was?

No, not too much. The big bands of sheep were up on the hill behind us, which is Mount Tobin. They didn't come down too much because the sheep want to go higher in the summer because of the flies, and my dad kept his down low.

And who took care of the sheep, he did?

He did the one year when we had so many.

You said your brother-in-law; when your sisters married, some of them stayed at the ranch or close by?

One of them did. The third one was married to a fellow from Montana and they stayed on the ranch, did all the irrigating.

Now, you went through the eighth grade and tell me what you did then.

Then my dad hired the high school teacher and I went through one year of high school.

Now when you say he hired the teacher, where did she teach you? In your home?

No, she taught us high school at the same time that she taught the grade [school] children.

Oh, but he brought in a different teacher who was more advanced?

Yes.

He was able to have that authority with the school district?

Well, he worked it out with the superintendent.

So then did you work on the ranch through the years as a teenager?

Yes I did.

So tell me how your life developed then. How long did you stay there on the ranch?

I stayed until I was nineteen, at which time I married George William Schwin from Battle Mountain area.

Let's back up a little bit. Now you're way out on this ranch, how did you meet the fellow that you then married? Tell me about that.

I first met him when I was eleven years old. I came from the ranch to a place south of Battle Mountain to another ranch where they had a dance. I was with my sisters and all of us properly chaperoned. This ranch is Henry Filippini's now—but at that time, it was owned by two bachelors. We danced most of the night, and that's where I met George. He was with his mother and brothers.

When did you see him next?

I can't remember. I think with my sister and brother-in-law probably. He came to visit them. We didn't go together 'til I was about eighteen.

So how did you start to see each other when you lived so far apart?

Well, he'd drive over to see me and stay overnight. We had a bunk house and plenty of beds.

What was George doing when he married you? What was his work?

Well, he was prospecting. That was his one love of life. Mining and prospecting. But he didn't want to *ever* work for a company. He wanted to just lease and make his money that way, which he did a great deal *after* we were married. We spent from 1935 to 1939 in different mining camps doing that very thing. Once at the Getchell Mine and we lived in tents. We had a teepee tent, a ten-by-ten teepee tent. We could walk wound a little in the middle.

A little in the middle, that rhymes. Now, where was the Getchell Mine?

It's in Humboldt County and we were over there for one winter and part of the summer.

What were they mining?

Gold, I think.

And so you weren't spoiled, you were used to roughing it on the ranch. Describe a little bit about your life at the mine when he was busy mining. What was your life, were there other people that you made friends with?

There were other tents there. Two other couples lived there too. We had a little stove that I could bake in and we kept very nice and warm. The warmest I ever was in that tent was one morning when we had four inches of snow on the tent, as soon as we built a fire,

the snow all melted. [laughter] Above the mine, there were dead quaking aspen trees, and a time or two I chopped one down and dragged it for our firewood. [laughter] Then we supplemented with coal.

What did you do with your time beside baking bread and building the fire while he was busy?

Well, I'd visit with the ladies next door. I kept busy washing clothes by hand with a washboard [chuckles] and trying out new recipes—just generally living.

Where did you shop for your groceries and supplies?

We'd have to drive into Winnemucca. A time or two we were so snowed-in, we had to be dragged out by Caterpillar.

Oh my! Did he have an automobile?

We had a little 1936 or 1937 Ford coupe.

Now, you said you were in that mine for how many years?

No, we just did that every winter. We'd go to a mine and work during the winter, then we'd go back to the ranch and spend the summer.

You mean at your parents' ranch?

No, at George's ranch.

Oh, he had a ranch?

Yes.

Oh, okay, cause I thought he just wanted to mine and didn't want to ranch.

That's true. [laughter]

In other words, he was forced to ranch.

He loved the ranch. That was his home. He wanted to keep it, but he wanted to make money by mining.

Now was his ranch the one that is south of Battle Mountain in Lander County?

Yes.

Was that originally his family's ranch?

Yes. The family used to live there and they used to have a school on *that* ranch too. When they moved down to the valley, they gave us the upper place.

Now was there a name to that ranch?

They just called it Mill Creek.

So tell me about your life and the summers at the ranch.

Well, we were busy. There was an old house. Mice and rats had gotten in it over the years while it was vacant. We tore down most of it and kept three rooms. I raised my young ones, two children [laughing] in that little three-room house. Life was hard—it was during the Depression, but we were happy.

I want a little more detail on the ranch. Did you continue haying and helping?

Oh yes, it was necessary—just the two of us for seven years. When I had our babies, that changed our way of living a little bit. There was a little bit more work to do and I didn't have a washing machine. We had electric lights

but not electricity. My husband used a car generator, six-volt, and made a water wheel to generate lights, six-volt lights in the house.

Were there cattle or sheep or how did you earn a living from the ranch?

George's mother was living in the valley with her other two sons. She was a widow. She gave us five cows and calves and that's where we got our start.

Did you have mainly cattle and hay?

Yes. We raised our own hay for the cattle.

SA. So you were familiar with all of that.

Oh yes, yes. And familiar [chuckles] with all the work that goes with it. [laughter] We had a garden, berry patch, raised chickens and rabbits, and had a milk cow or two. When unexpected company dropped in, I often served waffles topped with whipped cream and strawberries. It was a popular meal.

Your first child was George, named after his father. Tell me about the medical facilities and where he was born.

Well, they had a doctor here in Battle Mountain, but I went down to Winnemucca because I had a sister there and I wanted to go and wait my time there, so he was born in Winnemucca. We came out of Mill Creek in snow storms and deep snow both times that I had babies.

Did Winnemucca have better facilities, better hospital and doctor?

Yes, that's true, and I liked the doctor down there.

I want to hear a little more about your life at the ranch. How long did you both stay at that ranch? The rest of your married life?

We stayed from November 1939 to November 1972 when we sold it.

Where were your closest neighbors, how far?

Thirteen miles away. Three different ranches were each thirteen miles away.

Now I want to ask this, did you come into Battle Mountain very much?

Mostly just to get groceries. We never came in just to visit, to make too many friends, although we met lots of people because they'd come out to the ranch. We had an orchard on the ranch and they came out after apples.

When you said they came out, they'd buy them from you?

Oh no, not usually. Before I was there, the family peddled apples here in town, but we didn't.

In the early forties, what was Battle Mountain like compared to today?

Well, everybody seemed to know everybody else. We had many friends and acquaintances who came out to the ranch. There were, I would say, about four hundred people here. I think four hundred voters possibly, but it was very small.

Were there a lot of organizations and churches in this little town?

As far as I can remember there were three churches. At that time they didn't

have a Mormon church at all. There were two Mormons in town but they never said a word about being Mormon because they were afraid of being criticized. Now we have a great big Mormon church and lots of people of that religion.

How many churches did you see develop in those years as the town was growing? about how many organized churches, structures?

As I recall, a Baptist church, Jehovah's Witness and Assembly of God have all developed over the years. The Methodist church was already here and it's still standing and they're still using it. The bell on the top was donated by the Marvel family, but I can't remember the date. A Catholic church and an Episcopal church were also here.

Back in that period you said there wasn't a big population. What kind of stores and restaurants or casinos were there?

We had three grocery stores. One was Swackhamer's, one was Lemaire's, and one was Horton's. It's now the site of the Owl Club. In that store there was one room where they sold a few clothes and quite a few shoes. One of the Mormons I spoke about took care of that. She was a little short lady. Really nice. [laughter] We also had a meat market, three saloons and maybe three restaurants.

Where did you buy your clothing and supplies from?

Mostly from the catalogs.

Which catalogs?

Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck, both.

I understand there was a train running through Main Street. Was that there when you were coming into town?

No, when I move here all they had was a little single car that would run up and down the track—take the mail back and forth, but very seldom was it freight.

Was that the one that would go to Austin?

Yes.

Do you have any other recollections about the town then? What about the schools?

The high school was already built when I moved here and the grammar school was already going. They had an Indian school behind the grammar school, and my friend was the teacher.

What's her name?

Myra Miller. She's ninety-six or ninety-seven years old and living in Elko in a rest home.

When your son was born in 1943, and he reached school age, where did he go to school?

He went through all his grades here in Battle Mountain as did my daughter.

And how did he get to the school?

We had to rent a little place, a little two-room house, later renting larger houses over the years as the family grew up. Finally, we bought the land where the little house was and put this mobile home on.

Oh, so the house was here at this location?

Yes.

Did all of you come and stay, or did your husband stay part of the time at the ranch?

No, he stayed at the ranch, except he'd come in Wednesday nights and then I'd go home every weekend, *every* weekend, and I put clothes in the car and all the groceries in the car, then I'd bring back everything on Monday morning. [laughter] It went on and on for years.

Oh my. So then you lived a good part of the time right here in Battle Mountain. Tell me how your life changed when your son went to school and you were staying in that little house.

To help with the expenses, I babysat two children. One of 'em didn't go to school, the other one did, but he'd come to my house for lunch. I did everything from babysitting to working in homes. I worked for the doctor and I also worked for the hospital and I was in the Home Health Service for a while. Anything that wasn't a job that kept me too confined, as I had to go home to the ranch on weekends.

Now, I have a few questions, because you said in the health and in the hospital: Was that here in Battle Mountain? and describe what the health situation was like here. And did you work in a hospital?

I worked at the hospital, I was relief cook for four-and-a-half years.

And how was that hospital?

It was about an eight-bed hospital and there were one or two old people in it. They had a few more beds later, but it was really, for

what they could do here, it was really pretty nice.

Was this in the forties, late forties/early fifties?

No, it was fifties and early sixties. I was working there when President Kennedy was shot.

Did people in Battle Mountain then use that hospital or did they still go away when they had babies or surgery?

It depended on the people and whether or not we had a doctor. We had a little bit of trouble keeping the doctors, after Dr. Hyde died. The others just came and stayed temporarily.

You worked so hard, I don't see how you'd have time for any other recreation. You were just working all the time?

We're going to stay with your son a little bit, then we'll move to your daughter—as he was going through school, tell me what his life was like as a young boy.

Well, like all young boys. He was an average student and participated in sports and had a lot of friends. Sometimes he'd be gone in the evening and sometimes I'd worry about him.

At what age?

When he was in his teens in high school. And I would think, "Gee, I hope he's all right." You know how mothers worry. But I later found out he was riding around with the deputy sheriff! They were very good friends, and as a result, that's what he went into was law enforcement.

Oh, how interesting. And did he socialize with other boys and girls?

Oh yes, they all had their friends. They all met at somebody's house or maybe at my house. On weekends he'd bring a friend to the ranch.

Did he help in working on the ranch?

Yes. As he grew older, he had summer jobs to earn extra money.

What kind of work would he do in the summer?

He worked on a ranch and he worked for a hay contractor. He did all sorts of things like that—he drove truck. He worked for his uncles, the Ruffli brothers, and the neighbors, Henry and Rose Filippini, and he worked for a hay contractor. He worked in the hay fields bucking bales, drove haying equipment, rode horseback and drove truck. After graduating from high school, George went on to Chabot College in Oakland, California, and later to the University of Nevada in Reno. He moved back to Battle Mountain and went to work as a deputy sheriff for Sheriff Don Maestretti. He was a deputy in Austin, Nevada, for two years, and at age twenty-three he ran for the sheriff's position and was elected. He served as Lander County Sheriff for twelve years.

Now let's move to your daughter, and I see there's a five-year difference in your children's ages. Tell me a little about Vera. She was just a little baby when you moved to Battle Mountain, so she just almost grew up in Battle Mountain.

Yes, she did, but she missed the ranch and her dad. She would beg to go home with him when he came to town.

So tell me about her when she started school. What kind of a young girl was she and what was her life like?

She was an outdoor-type girl. She helped her dad ride, worked in the hay fields and went mining with him. She had a typical childhood. She had a lot of friends and was an average student. She participated in girls' volleyball and played in the school band and was a member of the school's Pep Band.

Now, as your children were growing up, you told me that your son became interested in law enforcement. What were your daughter's interests? What interests was she developing?

She at one time wanted to be a hair dresser or a nurse. She's very clever with hair and does a great deal of it yet. But she married a rancher and continued on in the lifestyle that she liked.

Did she meet him here in Battle Mountain?

Yes. She met her husband here in Battle Mountain. He was two or three grades ahead of her.

What was his name?

Jim Baumann, and when they were married they moved to the family's ranch over in the Cortez area. Then they later bought a ranch and moved over near Eureka, Nevada, and have lived there for twenty years. She has helped her husband with everything from haying to doctoring animals and riding. They went back to Denver to learn how to perform caesarians on cows, cut out cancer eyes, and if the animal was bloated, they know how to take care of that.

And she can do that?

Yes. She can do all that.

Amazing! You probably would have done that if you had the chance, too.

Yes, I think I could have. She did a cesarean on a cow with an audience of little children, grandmothers, intermediate ages—in two hours flat she said she had the cow sewed up and the calf was alive. I've watched them do that, it's interesting. She now works for Eureka County as executive director for the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council. They sold their cows a few years ago and lease the ranch now, but continue to farm their 320 acres of alfalfa in Diamond Valley. They plan to buy cows again when their son is out of college and returns home.

Do they have a family?

Yes, she has two children.

Yes, your grandchildren. Where do they live?

My granddaughter, the oldest one, is an elementary school teacher. She teaches at the Eureka Elementary School.

Where?

In Eureka, Nevada. And my grandson is going to UNR UUniversity of Nevada-Reno).

And what's his interest?

Animal Science.

Isn't that wonderful?

Yes.

Now I want to get back to you and your life with your husband. Your children are raised. Did you go back to stay at the ranch then?

No, by that time I had gotten a job as dispatcher at the sheriff's office. It was an interesting situation because my son was elected Sheriff after he was a deputy. I immediately told the commissioners that I would resign because I didn't want anyone to criticize me working at the sheriff's office. And one of the commissioners told me, "You stay right there. We checked it out and it isn't nepotism because you were working there first." So I continued as dispatcher.

What year was that, that you started as a dispatcher? About when? Was your daughter still in high school?

Yes.

Okay, so that gives a time period.

And I worked fourteen-and-a-half years and I retired in 1979.

And did they train you?

Yes. We had to learn the "10 code" and learn how to handle emergencies. We also acted as matrons.

When you say us, they hired several?

They hired four of us.

Four, because the town was growing? Tell me what was happening in the town that they were growing, that they hired you.

The town was growing and they had an old-fashioned setup. There was a siren for any kind of emergency or if they wanted one lone cop. It wasn't a very good situation. After they hired the dispatchers, they put radios in the patrol cars. They still had the siren for emergencies. Everybody would get in their cars and drive all mound town trying to find out where the fire was or what the excitement was.

Which created more wrecks.

Oh yes. Eventually they got pagers which was a wonderful thing. The whole town didn't hear the siren any more.

So tell me actually what the dispatcher does—what you did. Explain it in detail.

Well the dispatcher takes and writes down every call that comes in, records every conversation that comes in—or did at the time I worked. I don't know what it is like now. When they would call in a wreck, you'd dispatch the ambulance after you got all the information, then you'd send your officers. The officers would then radio back and have requests. You did everything, just as they said to do, word-for-word.

A very responsible job.

Yes.

So how long did you work at that job?

Fourteen-and-a-half years. We had a murder here in town. It was really kind of bad. That was on the Sheriff's day off. He had taken his dad up Mill Creek to do some fishing and I kept calling him on the radio. He finally got to a spot in the canyon that he could hear me, so

he slammed on the brakes and he could hear me calling by radio. I told him we had had a murder—or suspected murder—and that the victim was at the hospital at the time. There were several bad things that happened.

Were these local people who were shot? Or local people doing the shooting?

They were living here at the time, but they weren't natives.

Because you were in the job like that, you saw a lot of changes here. Tell me when you started working at the sheriff's office what Battle Mountain was like in the sixties. What was it like when you started as a dispatcher? It was growing obviously.

Oh, it was growing all the time, yes. Mining had come in here. American Smelting and Refining Company came in here. They were the first out at what later became Duval which is now Battle Mountain Gold.

Did they put up workers' trailers or workers' cabins?

No, I don't remember that. Some of them came and put in their own homes or bought whatever was available.

Would they bring their trailers?

Some did.

Did some of them come with families?

Not usually.

Usually men alone?

Yes, men alone.

Did they have boarding houses?

They would all stay at the hotels and motels and go to the restaurant to eat.

What restaurant?

There were two, the Nevada and the Owl.

And so the town was changing, new people?

Gradually, yes.

How was the traffic coming through, because at that time you didn't have Interstate 80 bypassing the towns. The road was coming right through town. Was the traffic increasing?

Increasing by leaps and bounds, and sometimes it was terrible. I was really happy when they did bypass it.

And the big trucks came through?

Yes. We were one of the last towns to be connected to the freeway—and Lovelock, I think, was later.

By then the railroad had stopped, right? The railroad to Austin had stopped running?

Oh yes, it stopped way back, about the early forties.

I also understand the train that ran through town used to stop here, as a stop in Battle Mountain.

Well, often they did. They had passenger trains here when I first came. I believe it was Southern Pacific. Then they took the passenger trains off. But I can remember back

when they would throw a bundle of mail off the train at night when they passed through.

Really?

Big long sack of mail.

Just dump it off?

Just throw it off and the fellow, who at that time was leasing the Owl—he had a restaurant there, but he was leasing the building—he would walk over and pick up that bundle of mail and apparently take it to the post office in the morning. I can also remember way back when I first came here, down in the middle of town there was a pump. We'd come in to go to dances and we would drain our car because we didn't have Prestone [antifreeze] in those days. We'd fill up after we started the car and warmed it up, and head home.

Did your family use the train at all when it was a passenger train?

No, not much. I sent my son to California on the passenger train when he went to college, but that was the only time.

Tell me what other changes you observed during those years you were working as a dispatcher. Did crimes increase? Did accidents increase? What was the flavor of the town in those fourteen-and-a-half years?

Well, it went by waves. Sometimes we'd get a group of people in town, more or less transients, but they'd come in to work and they would be rabble-rousers, just vicious. And then other times there would be a lull and very quiet. You never knew what was coming through the front door.

By then you had two casinos, the Owl and Nevada.

And Silver Dollar Bar.

Was there any drinking problem in town, alcohol?

No, not any worse than it is now. Probably not any different. It's always been here.

And what about prostitution, which is legal?

Oh it was always here.

And was it obvious or subtle?

Very subtle. The girls would stay at the houses—except for their one trip up to town to the doctor—that would be all we'd ever see of them. They were very well managed, very good as far as I'm concerned.

But it was not obvious? No trouble?

No. Except one time, before I came here, they had a murder over there. I know nothing about it except what's written about it.

It wasn't during your time as a dispatcher?

No, no.

Now when you were dispatcher, did you still go to the ranch weekends?

It got so I wasn't going out quite so often, but I usually went out on Sunday and Monday, my days off.

And what about your husband, what was he doing through this period?

He was still out on the ranch. And he was leasing Camp McCoy and mining gold.

So you didn't see him too much during that period that you were working?

Well, two or three times a week and then he sometimes would come in during the week.

Now you said later you sold the ranch. Tell me what brought that about and when?

My husband was in poor health for quite some time and so we decided to sell in 1972.

Is that about when you retired? You retired in the seventies from dispatcher?

No, we sold in 1972. He moved to town and lived for seven years before I retired in 1979.

So then he sold the ranch and you lived here in this house?

Yes.

Who did he sell the ranch to?

To Henry Filippini, Jr.

So he came to live in Battle Mountain, and what was your life like then? You were working and was he not well? Did you have to take care of him?

No, he was up and around, but you could see by his complexion he wasn't a bit well.

He was older than you?

Yes, eight-and-a-half years. But his health was bad; he was a heavy smoker. He should have quit but he wouldn't.

And so did your life change very much? Did you then have a little time with him on weekends to socialize?

Oh yes, by then my daughter was living on the ranch. We went over there to visit her and the babies, or go out on picnics or travel. We traveled through Arizona, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.

And where was your son living?

He was here in Battle Mountain. He was Sheriff.

So you had them all around you.

Yes.

And you probably enjoyed that job?

Oh I did. I liked it. Yes.

When you retired, what was the reason you retired then?

Well, because there was a change in administration. My son had been defeated in the election, my husband was sick—in fact I retired the last of December, and he died in April 1979.

Did you get a retirement?

Yes.

And did they give you health care when you were in that job?

Yes, we had health insurance.

Did you have it when your husband was sick?

Well, part of the time.

So he died shortly after you retired.

Yes.

After your husband died and you were retired, tell me what your life was like then.

Well, it was an adjustment—a hard adjustment, because I had to learn to live alone. I came from a large family, never had been alone. It's been very hard. George and I had been married for forty-four years.

So how do you spend your time?

I spend a great deal of it just being with my own family or visiting my sisters in Winnemucca. I have a friend or two that I often drive to Elko to the dentist or to the doctor. I also read a lot.

I want to go back, and I want to find out a little bit about your parents, how after you left the ranch and married, what happened in their lives?

Well, after I left—I was the sixth child—there were two more left at home. They eventually married and one sister stayed until she was past twenty-one, and then she married. Different times they had one son-in-law or another, but it didn't work out very well.

So what happened with your parents?

They sold the ranch. My mom died—she had a stroke.

How old was she?

She was about seventy-two, I think. After she died, my dad was talked into selling. He didn't want to sell.

Where did he go?

He went to Winnemucca.

And who did he live with in Winnemucca?

My sister, Mabel McCoy.

And how old was he when he died?

Ninety-four.

Ooo! That's a long life! Did he adjust to his life without your mother?

Yes, he finally did, but it was different. What was really hard for him was the fact that all his friends, his own age, had died. He had no one to reminisce with.

Did you see him very much?

Yes. He'd come to visit once in a while and I'd go to Winnemucca often.

Now I'm going to come back to Battle Mountain. You mentioned that you were glad when Interstate 80 passed the town, got some traffic off the street. I imagine there were mixed feelings. Did it take away business from the restaurants and motels when the highway bypassed?

Well they claimed it did, but they're all still in business. I can't see that anybody really suffered too badly, but they did quarrel about it a great deal.

And also there was quite a lot of controversy when the county seat moved from Austin to Battle Mountain, and I'm doing interviews in both places. Tell me what was happening in Battle Mountain when they were working hard to get the vote to move it, and from your

personal knowledge or information, what was the atmosphere like?

Well it depended on which side you were on. Austin was really upset with Battle Mountain, and to this day, lots of 'em won't come near Battle Mountain. In my opinion, it was a shame. But as far as the money was concerned, to take a bunch of vehicles and transport the district attorney and all the officials up there, it really was a saving in money to have it here. That's the only advantage, but I feel sorry for Austin still.

Seeing both places and how big Battle Mountain is, wasn't it a hardship for more people to have to travel to Austin for all of their dealings? It's a pretty big trip, wouldn't it be more people traveling there than now that it's here in Battle Mountain, because there are only about three hundred and fifty in Austin?

Yes. That's true. That's really true. It was a sensible thing to do, but it was just the fact that it was such a change I felt bad about it.

Did it create a lot of new employment? I work a lot at the County Board of Commissioners' offices and see lots of young women with jobs that are required. Would they have been able to fill all those jobs in Austin? Would people have moved there?

No, I don't believe they ever would. Austin is very isolated, and I really doubt that they would have wanted to.

And it doesn't look like there are enough young people that live there to fill jobs.

No. There just isn't that many people. And many jobs have been created here that never were here when I first moved here.

Of course as the city grows and permits for mining and houses and businesses...

Yes, they have all that, but they also have offices in Austin which were, you know, with the offices here, so there are some employed there, yeah.

Yes, I work in that little courthouse sometimes too. There seems to be new growth in Battle Mountain with the rise of the price of gold, I understand new mines are opening. Have you observed changes? It seems to be a good economy here.

Yes, everybody seems to have work, except just a couple days ago, I had a panhandler come to the door. That's the first....

Was he an outsider?

Yes, he said he came here and he was hungry. He said he was promised a job and he got here and then the job had fizzled out. I'm wondering if the economy is as good as it could be.

Was he the only one?

That's the only one so far. I hope it's the last one.

It seems, coming from California where there's so much unemployment, that if someone wants to work in Lander County, there seems to be work around.

Yes, they seem to be able to get work. At least I don't hear much about it anyway.

Are new structures going up?

Yes, there are some. A brand new home just finished—some friends of mine. They

plan to stay here. They want the hospital to keep running too. That's another thing that's bad. They're being phased out, these little hospitals are, according to our doctor. And eventually, it might just be a nursing home or a station where they can get first aid. I don't care much about the present set-up because we ail have a bad time with health insurance. And if you get sick and go to this hospital, you pay emergency room and everything, and then you're transferred to Elko and you pay it all over again. That's a bad situation.

Is it a county hospital?

Yes, it's a county hospital.

There s not enough citizen interest to maybe raise a small tax to support a hospital? Is that it?

They're working on it right now, but I don't believe we'll ever get the doctors to come here. It'll just be an emergency station and then you're sent out by ambulance.

I heard there was a woman dentist in Battle Mountain.

Yes, there has been a woman dentist here.

I was just wondering about recruiting some women doctors.

No, I don't know what they've ever done about that.

It's a growing town. One of the things that interests me in the interviews is how many children stay in the area, if some would entice their children to get a doctorate and come back and practice in their town. There seems so many possibilities, doesn't there?

With the mines though, they have their own ambulances. We have a couple of nice doctors right now.

Where do you go then, do you go to Elko?

I do, yes.

I want to change the subject a little bit. I've noticed that there are quite a few Spanish-speaking Mexican people in the area and I wonder if they came up with the railroad or, do you know anything about that population?

At the time I was working at the sheriff's office, they were taking them back. They were flying them back.

Back to where?

To Mexico, because there was such an influx of Mexican people.

Were they brought here to work on the railroad?

They just sneaked in.

You mean they were illegals?

Illegals came in, and they were rounded up and sent back.

Here in Battle Mountain?

Yes, yes.

What attracted them this far? I know we have them because I live on the border, so you understand it. How would they come up here?

They come here to their friends or family, then they go on to Chicago for whatever reason, then they come back here eventually.

I see. Do some of them work on the ranches, or what kind of work?

Yes, some of them do.

I see some in the restaurants, the young people working.

They want to be out with the rest of the young people, the same as our people do.

Yes. And is that population—the ones that are legal that are citizens—is that pretty stable?

As far as I know, yes.

And tell me about the Indians.

I don't know a great deal about the Indians because they keep to themselves.

They had a special school?

They did at one time. It apparently was illegal to put them in with the other children.

Did they integrate?

Yes, finally, my children went to school with several different Indians.

Now where is the Indian complex here? Where do the Indians live?

They live on a colony west of town here. It was just a small Indian colony. They decided to go federal and after they did, they extended another colony out several miles past the overpass.

And what kind of work do they do? Do they work on ranches?

Some of them do. I know one man works at that mill over north of town.

What kind of mill?

Chemical mill. Some do housework, and some don't do anything. [laughter]

Now do the people in the town who are not Indians, are they reluctant to hire them?

Oh no. We don't have too much of that here in town. They hire anybody.

They're glad to find workers and they need workers. Have there been with the new mines new people coming in now? Do you observe people that look unfamiliar to you? Are there more workers coming in?

Well I don't know, lately, whether there's a lot of workers, but I do know that my son works with people from...Oh, we'll saw Oriental people.

Where's he working now?

At Battle Mountain Gold.

What does he do there?

He's Chief of Security.

Oh how interesting. What does he see out there?

He has one or two workers with him. One of them was part Oriental and then one of our local boys married a Negro when they went south.

How long ago was that?

A couple of years.

Oh! Are there any other blacks?

There are a few. One or two used to work as maids over at the houses.

At the hotels?

No, at the houses of prostitution. Not as prostitutes, they were there more or less as maids, just to kind of oversee things.

Where is the house of prostitution?

They're north of the tracks over there.

You say "They." How many?

Well, there were two or three at one time. Now I think maybe there's only one.

Does it have a name on it or would you know what it was?

One was Green Lantern, and one was the Desert Club.

Now, is there anything else specifically to Lander County and this area that might be of interest to anyone, that I haven't asked you? Where do you do your shopping now?

I do all my shopping here. Well, not all of it either. If I'm in Winnemucca, I take advantage. I do miss the Sears store here, since that closed.

They had a Sears store?

They had a Sears outlet store here.

Why did that close? Not enough business?

Because Sears Roebuck decided they didn't want any more catalog stores.

Oh, this was a catalog store, and they're phasing out their catalogs. Is there anything else that might shed light on this area that I haven't asked you?

I can't think of anything. It's changed a great deal since I came here, with the paved streets and more people, more arguments.

What's the tax base here?

I'd have to look it up, I can't remember that.

From what I understand, there's certain things that aren't taxed in Nevada. Any of those benefits up here? A lot of people are moving to Nevada because there's no state tax and there's lower property tax and lower taxes for businesses. Do you know anything about that?

Well no, I'm not familiar with it. I have friends who moved up from San Jose and they have a business in Reno and that's the reason *they* came here. I couldn't tell you the tax base here—my daughter worked in the assessor's office, so she could tell you. I do know that Eureka County taxes are much lower than they are in Lander County. Lander County's pretty well up to the limit I think.

Well, unless you have something else to share, I want to thank you so much for being interviewed for the Lander County Oral History Project. You've added a lot of interesting and new things to it, and so on behalf of the Lander County Project, I thank you.

You're welcome.

LOMA SCHWIN PHOTOGRAPHS



LOMA SCHWIN, AUGUST 1993.

Part of the little house first rented in 1943 when son George started school in Battle Mountain.

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

LOMA SCHWIN
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Loma Schwin Interview

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ESTELLE SHANKS

PREFACE

The mining boom in Austin and Eureka, Nevada in the 1860s and 1870s attracted many people, including Estelle Shanks' paternal and maternal great-grandparents. Her grandmother, Letitia Estella Case, grew up at the Devil's Gate near Eureka, where she later met Estelle's grandfather, Charles Allen. Estelle's mother, Charlotte Melvina Allen, was born at Devil's Gate. The Allen family moved to Cortez Mine when Charlotte was thirteen. While working in the Cortez boarding house, she met Matthew Bertand, who was working the mines. They married and had two children, Frank and Estelle. Estelle tells about their early life at the Cortez mining camp where her parents and aunt ran the grocery store and post office and they lived in an apartment in the back of the store.

During the Depression they moved to Beowawe. Her father had various jobs, and was gone a lot, working at a mine out of Carlin, then with the WPA on roads, then back to Cortez where he worked at a silver

mine. Estelle, Frank and their mother spent the school months at Carlin since the Cortez school ended at eighth grade. During her junior year, Estelle stayed with relatives in Austin. There were ten students in Estelle's high school graduating class in 1941, the largest that ever graduated from Austin. There's only been one larger graduating class—eleven! While there, her father died and her mother moved to Austin.

Estelle married a fellow who came to Austin to work on the new airport then followed him during wartime to various locations. They divorced and Estelle returned to Austin with a six-year-old daughter. Her mother was now County Treasurer of Lander County! They opened "Mom's Place," a lunch counter/soda fountain/bar. Then she met and married a young Basque cowboy, Laurence Saralegui. After working on a ranch all day, Laurence tended bar evenings. After two years, they went to Battle Mountain to lease the Commercial Hotel, cafe and bar which was a gathering place for the ranchers and cowboys and the many Basque sheepherders.

They opened a back dining room to serve Basque family-style dinners. Estelle loved her new life.

When the mines around Battle Mountain closed, they had to give up the lease and moved back to Austin where they leased land, bought cattle, raised alfalfa while still running "Mom's Place." They sold it in 1976 and also gave up the ranch. Estelle went to work for the County Clerk, became Deputy Treasurer, then ran for the office of Recorder/Auditor and won. She held that position until 1982 when the county seat was moved to Battle Mountain. Her husband died that same year.

Estelle and her sister-in-law Madge Bertrand became lay readers in St. George's Episcopal Church, then studied together for about three years, and were ordained together. As ordained ministers, they conduct the services, have holy communion and can many people. They do baptisms and funerals—all the sacraments except confirmation.

In 1986 Estelle married John Shanks. They first met in the 1970s when Estelle's husband gave him permission to dig on some of their properties for antique bottles. After their spouses passed away, they got better acquainted and married. John opened a rock, bottle and jewelry shop, "The Trading Post," which is a highlight on the main street of Austin.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Estelle Shanks at her home in Austin, Nevada, May 12, 1993.

Estelle, I'm pleased to be here to interview you this morning. Would you give us your full name?

Estelle Shanks: Estelle Shanks.

And where were you born?

I was born in Reno, Nevada.

And what was the date?

February 19, 1924.

Tell me briefly about your grandparents, starting with your father's parents, where they were born and where they lived most of their lives—just very briefly.

I believe that my father's father was probably born in France or in Canada, French Canadian.

What was his name?

His name was Narcis Bertrand. He came to Austin and Eureka, which was Lander County at that time, to work in the mines.

Which mine did he work in, do you know?

Well, there's a Getty's and Bertrand's mining district in Eureka, and I understand that he was involved in the smelters there in the 1870s.

Now that had his name. Was he part owner of that mine?

I'm not sure.

Was he married when he came here?

No.

Where did he meet your grandmother?

Here in Austin, I believe.

What was her name before she married?

Matilda Lockard.

When did they marry?

In 1872.

Did you know your grandparents?

No.

Never met them. Now, let's go to your mother's paren What was your grandfather's name on that side?

His name was Charles Allen.

And do you know where he was born?

He was barn in Decora, Iowa [May 15, 1864].

What was your grandmother's name?

Letitia Estella Case.

And do you know where she was born?

She was born in Benton, Indiana [December 10, 1872].

And do you know how they met and married?

My grandmother was living in Eureka, Nevada, and my grandfather came there to work in the mines.

Both grandfathers came there to work in the mines. It must have been very active mining in that period.

Yes, very definitely.

Did your grandmother's parents come for mining as well, and brought her, do you know?

Her father whose name was Chester Case, was one of the Green Mountain Boys in Vermont, and he was married to Isabel Case. Her maiden name was Nichols, I believe. Isabel Nichols Case came here to join her husband Chester Case, and they had seven children. She liked it here in this part of the country, and she was always ill back in the East. So she wanted to stay here. Her brother had the hay ranch in Eureka and she wanted to stay here because her health was better, but he wanted to return to the East. So he took one of the daughters and returned to the East. And Isabel Case stayed here in Eureka They were divorced, and Isabel Case then married a man by the name of Andy Loucks who had come from the East, from New York, to the California Gold Rush, and then to Virginia City, then to Lander County. And they were married and they owned and operated a way station at the Devil's Gate, which is eight miles west of Eureka. They had big barns and a big eating house there for the teamsters that were hauling charcoal from the charcoal pits to the smelters in Eureka. And my grandmother, Letitia Estella was living there with them, and that's where she met my grandfather, Charles Allen.

What an interesting story! Are you named after Letitia's middle name?

Yes.

Very, very appropriate.

She always went by the name of Estella.

What was your mother s name and where was she born?

My mother was Charlotte Melvina Allen and she was born there at Devil's Gate, Eureka, Nevada, June 9, 1893. My mother and her family moved from Eureka at the time that she was thirteen years old. They moved to the mining camp of Cortez and she was the oldest of nine children. My grandfather worked in the mines there, and my mother, Charlotte Allen, married when she was nineteen, married a man by the name of John Hamlin who came from Michigan to work in the mines. And they were married for six years, and he died with the Spanish flu in 1918 after the First World War. She was a widow for two years.

Did they have any children?

No. She was working in the big boarding house, rooming house, in a hotel, in Cortez, and my father was working in the mines. That's where they met, and they were married in November 1920, and then they moved to Beowawe and then eventually got around to Austin. My father died in Mill Canyon, which is over in the Crescent Valley area, in 1959.

Let's go way, way back now, before that period. How old was your mother when she married your father, do you know?

She was probably about twenty-seven, I believe.

And then when were you born after their marriage?

Frank was born first, and I think my mother was like twenty-eight, and then she was thirty when I was born.

Did you stay there at that Cortez camp?

Well, we sort of moved back and forth between Beowawe and Cortez. Then we graduated from grammar school in Cortez. There were six of us children in school, and there were three families and one old bachelor that lived there at the time. The teacher was the mother of one of the families, and her husband had a lease in one of the old mines in Cortez, and my dad was working with him. She taught school there. We graduated from grammar school there, and then my brother and I went to Carlin to high school for our first two years.

I want to bring you way, way back, because we're going to go very slowly through your earliest days, before we move out of there.

Okay.

I want you to go back to your very, very first memories, because what I want to find out from you is kind of a visual picture the first that you can remember, what it was like in your household before you went to school. Let's cover that first. What was the house like?

Well the first house that I remember was when we lived in Beowawe and I was about three years old when we left there. But I have a memory before that. I was only about two years old, and my mother was called to my grandparents' ranch, and her brother had died. There was a lot of flu going on, and her brother had died—he was only thirteen years old. And it seems that he had fallen out of the old Model T Ford at one time and evidently cracked his skull, and they never knew it. And then when he got the flu, it settled in this crack on his brain. And they called it meningitis, I believe, at that time. And then the two younger girls in the family...The brother's name was Richard, or

Dick. And then the youngest girl was Lettie, and the next oldest one was Kate. And Lettie and Kate both had the flu really bad, and so my mother was called to go out to help them and to be with the family. I remember I had never had a babysitter, my mother was always there. So I woke up this one morning, and I was on one end of the cot, and my brother was on the other end of the cot, and I opened my eyes and looked up and in the big bed in the bedroom was my cousin Isabel and her husband Paul. It was quite a shock to me, because like I say, I'd never been away from my mother before, and then all of a sudden just to wake up and without any memory of how I got there or anything. And so then we got up and got around and my cousin and her husband took us out to my grandmother and grandfather's ranch. And my mom was there, and my dad and my two aunts were in bed in the big living room. I remember sitting on a little doll trunk... [overcome by emotion] beside my aunt's cot. My mother came with a basin of water, and she told me, "You'll have to move, because I have to put this basin here."

Oh! And they weren't afraid that you would catch the flu by putting you so close?

No, my mother never seemed to be afraid of that at all. She was a very strong person, and it didn't worry her at all.

Did you live more at the mine, or did you live the same amount of time at both places?

Well, when we were living in Beowawe, my dad was working for a mining company there, but he was loading the concentrates from the mines and loading them onto the trains, I believe is what he was doing at that time. And then we moved to Cortez, but I was three years old when that happened. I

remember waking up, and I was in the car and it was dark, and I said [crying], "I want to go home!"

And where was home?

And Mom said, "Well, we're home"

Was that the Cortez?

That was Cortez, but it was about a mile below Cortez. It was what we called the Pump House. The big pumps and big tanks were there, in this big pump house. And we lived there and my dad took care of the pumps that pumped the water up to the mill, up to Cortez, up on the face of the mountain.

Now, let me ask you this, because for those that don't know, is the Pump House where you lived, the place where you always lived when you were at Cortez Mine?

No.

How long did you live in the Pump House?

We lived at the Pump House until I was about five years old, so I guess we were there a couple of years.

Okay, before school. Now, can you describe what a pump house looks like, or do you have photographs?

Well, we have some photographs of the house where we lived. I don't believe we have any pictures of the pump house itself, but the pump house was a long frame building. As I remember, it had tar paper over it, and it had big tanks for the water. And the water flowed from across the valley from the hills—it was a gravity flow, I believe—to the tanks, and

then they had to use the pumps to pump it. It had big diesel pumps to pump the water from there up to the hill to the mill and to the town.

So when you say you lived at the Pump House, you don't mean you lived in the pump house—you had a house near the pump house?

Yes, we had a little square house there by the pump house.

But they called the area the Pump House?

Uh-huh.

Okay. Were there any other people living there at that Pump House area?

No, there was just the one house and the pump house.

Do you have any recollections of that house and your life in that house?

Yes, it just had the one bedroom and we had the parents' big bed and then our small beds. I had a crib as I recall. I remember we had an old mother cat and she was always put out every night, but my dad would go check the pumps and she must have snuck in this one night, and I remember telling Mother, "Mama, I don't want this old cat," and she said, "Oh, honey there's no cat in here." And I said, "Yes, there is too!" and she finally got up with a flashlight and there was the cat laying on my chest just sleeping away, as comfortable as... [laughs]

Was it your family cat or a stay cat?

No, it was the family cat.

Do you remember playing outside or playing with other children? Just at the Pump House now.

Yeah, well we were pretty isolated right there at the Pump House: just my brother and I, we more or less played together. My mother always had chickens and rabbits because we were so far away from grocery stores, that in order to have the fresh meat. And so I remember the chicken house. It was kind of neat to go down in there. It was a dugout, and then it had a roof and then the roof was covered also with sod. So it's kind of a quiet dark place we could go in and sort of mysterious. And then of course we had a little outdoor privy, no indoor plumbing. I recall that the chicken yard wasn't too far from the path to the toilet or the privy. And I recall I would go out and I wore little coveralls that had a little button-up seat. And my mother would unbutton them for me, and then I would go out by myself and everything was fine, as long as I was going out, but when I would come out of the toilet, and I would come toward the house, there was a big old white Leghorn rooster, and he just watched and waited for me, and then he would come after me, and I would just turn and just screamin' and runnin' and the seat of my little coveralls were bobbin' around and I was just screamin' and hollerin'. And my brother would come out and he'd just go "boo" at him and the old rooster'd turn around and run. But he had me buffaloed, and I never had courage enough ever to turn around and say "boo" at him. [laughter]

That's a funny story! What did you do in the cold winter when you had to go out to the privy?

We just went! [chuckles]

You just went! Did you keep little potties in the house for emergencies?

We had some. We had some in the house for night, yeah, under the bed.

And how did you take your baths?

We had the big old No. 10 washtub, and we drug it in and put at on the big old wooden cookstove and poured water in it, filled it up with water, and then when it got warm, why we took it off of there, put it on the floor and usually if, as in one case where we lived, we had a one-room cabin, so we'd put chairs around and put blankets around for a little privacy, and mom always kept a kettle of warm water on the stove, so when we washed our hair, why then she poured water over our head to rinse it as warm water. And I remember screamin' and hollerin', I just knew I was going to drown because this water was all running over [chuckles] my face.

Now, from the Pump House, you moved into the mine area?

Yes, we moved up to Cortez.

How far was the Pump House from Cortez?

It was about a mile.

And was there a mining camp there at Cortez?

Yes, there was.

What was your father's work at the time when you moved into the mining camp?

Well, what was happening was that they were going to be closing the mine and the mill and that was one of the reasons why we left

the Pump House, because they had stopped pumping the water up to the mill, because they didn't need it. But they still had part of the mill running, we still had electricity, and we went up there and took over the grocery store and the post office.

Now when you say "took over," what does that mean?

I'm not really sure. I guess that the people that had it before had left town, because most of the people that had worked there at the mine were leaving, because it was closing. So anyway, my dad ran the store, and my aunt came from the ranch and ran the post office, which was in the same building as the store.

Now, was it like a lease, or a salaried position to do that, do you know? I mean, you didn't own the store? Or did you buy it or lease it, do you know?

Well, I'm not sure about the building, I suppose that maybe my dad bought the inventory. I really don't know. I've never really questioned or even asked.

You were about six when you moved to Cortez?

Well—let me go back—before we moved to the store, we moved into my cousins' house. They had moved to Beowawe. It was the back-and-forth sort of thing. Isabel and Paul Ryan had moved to Beowawe—and so we moved into *their* house at Cortez.

Oh, they had a house at Cortez?

Yes. Frank, my brother, had started to school when he was seven when we were at the Pump House. But then when we moved to Cortez, I was five in February. And then in

that September, then, I started to school. I was only five years old, and the little red school house was just across the street and down the hill a little bit from us.

So that made it convenient! Tell me what the house was like. Was it an upgraded house from the one at the Pump House?

It was probably built right around the same time. In fact, it was probably an older house. Cortez was a very old mining camp that went back almost as far as Austin. As a matter of fact, I think that they used to ship ore to Austin, I guess. Anyway, it goes back to the 1860s *also*. And when my mother was thirteen and moved over there, why, it was the very old, old mill that was working at that time. And then *that* had closed, and as so many of these mining camps do, they have a boom and a bust. And so they had closed that, and then they had built a new one up the canyon and were mining again and using the newer mill.

Well now take me back into your house.

Okay. So the house that we moved into, the Ryan house, was an adobe house with thick walls. But it was a very comfortable house: it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

How many rooms?

It had the kitchen/dining area, and the living room, the bedroom, and a nice big pantry, and...

Did it just have one bedroom again?

I believe so.

Was there an inside bathroom there?

No.

No, you still had the privy.

Outdoor.

Did it have electricity?

At that time, it did.

Was there running water in the house?

Yes, just the cold water in the sink.

I'd like you to tell me one typical day where you both were going to school, from the time you woke up, including waking up, and through dinner hour to bedtime—one typical day, a school day. Like what time you woke up, did you have chores? how'd you get to school? Try to think back through one day.

I was only five.

Well you can move it up to seven or so. Did you live there several years?

No.

How long did you live there?

We only lived there a short time in that particular house. As far as I know we got up in the morning, we always had to have a good breakfast.

Like what?

Well, usually hotcakes, maybe fried potatoes, but always eggs and bacon or sausage—some sort of meat—or ham.

Who cooked breakfast?

My mother.

Did you drink milk, hot cocoa, or what?

Probably Postum and canned milk.

That's interesting. Did you live a year in that house?

We might have lived a year there, and of course we had no refrigeration. There was no refrigerators or anything at that time. But the little pantry that was off of the kitchen had a window in it, and if you opened that and opened the door into the kitchen, there was a lot of good ventilation, and it kept the food cool. My mother was an expert at keeping things. [laughs] Keeping things cool and keeping things from spoiling.

She knew what to do! What did you do in hot weather?

To keep the food?

Yeah, to keep the food cool in hot weather. You couldn't get ice?

No, we never knew such thing as ice up there.

You just wouldn't milk too much.

Welt, she more or less watched it pretty carefully. Of course we didn't have too much perishable food like fresh vegetables, unless we had a little garden that we could get them out of. Of course we were fortunate because my grandparents had the ranch, which was about fifteen miles from there, and they would bring us some fresh vegetables. But we didn't have fresh produce, and we didn't have milk.

Or cheeses?

Just the canned milk and that sort of thing, so there wasn't too much...

Alright, you said you didn't stay in that house long. Did you move to another house within Cortez Mine?

Yes, that's when we moved to the store.

So when you moved to the store, was there a house connected with the store?

Uh-huh, there was an apartment in the back. While we were living in the Ryan house, though, they closed the mill down completely, and I remember the night that the lights went out, and the folks had brought in the old Coleman gas lamp and had it all ready to light, so that when the lights went out... And I remember very clearly how all of a sudden there was electricity, and then all of a sudden no lights! And so they were there, they had their matches and so they lit the matches and then they turned on the old lamp and then it wasn't burning quite brightly enough. It had the mantles and everything, the Coleman lamp. And so then it had a little built-in pump that you could unscrew and then you pumped like everything and got air in the little...

It had a wick?

It was a little tank at the base of it, and then there was a little pipe that went up and then where the mantles were up on it like this. Have you ever seen one of those?

Yeah.

And the mantles and the little generator thing that had a little thing on it you had

to turn to clean it out, and then after you'd pumped it and screwed the little pump back in again, why then it'd burn more brightly and it would hum and it was kind of neat.

Did that mean no more electricity there?

No more electricity.

No more for the rest of the time you were there?

No.

So you had to depend on Coleman stoves. Did you have butane?

No, we had all wood stoves.

But I mean for your electricity?

No, no. No, just the gas lanterns or coal oil lamps.

Alright, coal oil lamps.

You usually had the coal oil lamps in the kitchen, and you'd carry it to the bedroom with you. Or you had a candle in the bedroom. But in the evening when we were reading and wanted more light, why, they used the Coleman lamp.

And you always cooked with wood? You never got a butane stove?

No, wood.

Always wood, even in hot summer?

Oh, absolutely.

Alright, let's move over to the store. Because I'll talk more about your life when you're at the

store. What size was the apartment, and was it attached to the store?

Yes, it was all part of the same building.

Was it an upstairs/downstairs? or what was it?

No, you could go into the side door to the apartment, but you could go through the front door of the store, and the store was a big long building, and then in the back corner, kind of the northeast corner of the store building there was a little cubicle that had a little door with a little window in it that was the post office. And the mail came from Beowawe where there was a railroad. The mail came by what we called "the stage," a pickup with a driver, or sometimes a truck. And they brought the mail. They also brought groceries and things like that for people and for the store. You could go back through another door and into the apartment. And as I recall there was a kitchen and living area, and then there were...Well, I guess you'd call it two bedrooms.

Two small rooms for bedrooms?

Uh-huh.

Did you share a room with your brother?

No, I think he probably slept in the living room, as far as I know. He probably slept on a couch in the living room.

You had your own room?

Well, it was a little more like a closet, what they'd called a walk-in closet in this day and age, that I had a cot. And then when my aunt came to work in the post office, she had a cot in the same little place, and then my parents had a bedroom.

Now we're going to go back into the store, and describe to me not the physical store as much as the kinds of things that were sold in the store—if you can remember.

Well, everything was sort of being phased-down and a lot of people were leaving town, so our inventory wasn't real large, but I do recall that on either side of this long room there were counters. It had a high ceiling, and the shelves went almost from the floor to the ceiling, and they had ladders on rollers that rolled along the shelves, and on one side of the store, as I recall, there were groceries, canned goods, candy, this sort of thing. On the other side, on the west side of the store, the shelves had clothing, Levis and shirts and work clothes for the men, and more that sort of thing.

Did you sell any meat or chickens or eggs or dairy things?

I imagine we probably had eggs, ham, bacon, things like that, that weren't so perishable.

Did you have any things for the household?

I really don't recall. Let's see, I was only about six years old.

How long did you live there in that store and apartment? How many years?

We were only there maybe a year—I doubt if it was even a year.

At that time, were there transient men who weren't with families there at the mine in boarding houses?

Not too many at that particular time. When my mother was there as a young

woman, when the old mill was working, there were lots of the transient men. When I was a child there, most of them were families, as I recall, and there were quite a few families.

Like, what was "quite a few"? How many, approximately? Five, ten, twenty? How many?

Hm.

Can you picture how many houses that were occupied?

Oh, it was probably...about ten families.

Okay, now we're going to go back into the house, and from your recollection—even take the last year you were there, when you were maybe seven—I want to know a typical school day—chores you might have had, what time you got up—going through your school day, so we can visualize what it was like there.

Well, like I say, we got up fairly early and had a good breakfast and dressed and were off to school, and I don't remember at that particular time having many chores to do. I suppose we might have had some little thing, maybe our beds to make or something like that, but not too much of anything. And went to school. It was a one-room schoolhouse, one teacher, eight grades. I was in the first grade. There were four girls in the first grade. And then they went all the way up to the eighth grade. I remember big boys. My brother was in the second grade.

How many children in the whole first through eighth grades, approximately?

Oh, I'd say probably twelve, something like that.

Can you remember how she taught all the different grades? Would she put you in a different section of the room or just hand you different assignments? How was that?

We were just all in the same room. We just had like, the first grade would have their row of desks, and then the second grade had their row of desks, and the third and fourth and so on up to the eighth. As I recall, we were in the back of the building and then each grade up to the front, where the front door was, the older children were there, and they had their desks in a row. She would give us our assignments and when it was our turn, usually she started out with us in the morning, and would have our reading class or art class or whatever. Then she would go on to the next one—say she'd start out with math, well, everybody had a math class. And she would do math as she went along. And then as we did *ours* then we were given an assignment, and then she would go through the math and then come back like to reading, and she'd go through all of that with each grade. And we were expected to be studying and being quiet while she was going on with the rest of the classes.

If there were very bright students in one class, would she move them up to the next?

I don't remember them moving them up to the next. I don't know of any that bright! [laughter] I do recall that some of them were put back because they couldn't handle the lessons. Sometimes it was due to the teachers, because they weren't really...

It was just whoever was there at the mine?

Yeah. Sometimes I think in the smaller communities we got *excellent* teachers, but

then in some cases we got, you know, below average teachers.

Now, did you have to stay as a first grader, as long as the eighth graders, or did they let you go home earlier? That seems a long day for a first grader.

I really don't recall.

Did you go home for lunch? You were right there, close-by.

Oh yes.

Did you get any homework, or was it all done there in the classroom?

No, it was all done there in the class.

Was there any recess or breaks where you could play?

Yeah, we had a fifteen-minute recess in the morning and a fifteen minute recess in the afternoon.

Was it a fenced-in area?

No. No, it was just out there on the hill. But we had a designated area which was the playground, and we weren't supposed to leave that.

What kind of games did you play, do you remember? Did you play or just stand there and talk?

No, no, we played. We were very active. Some of the older children at *that* time and of course later on as we grew up, why, we joined in with the baseball. They had a bat and a ball and they had bases and we played baseball

and had a lot of fun. We didn't have anybody pressuring us to be a "pro," we just had a lot of fun.

Was it kind of evenly divided, boys and girls? Or more girls? Or what?

Seems like there was quite a few girls at that one particular time. We used to play marbles, jacks, and prisoner's base, and tag, and hide-and-seek, and all those different games.

When would you get home? around three o'clock? or two-thirty, or three? When would you get home?

I really don't recall at that particular time, my first grade.

When you went home then, did you help with anything in the house? What'd you do when you got home?

Well, I remember my mother was one of these people that the house and the kitchen were her domain, and she more or less had to do it her way. [chuckles] She'd tell me, "Well, it's easier for me to do it, than it is to try to [laughter] get you to do it, or wait for you to do it," or something. [laughs] But I remember we had an old Victrola that was a wind-up and a lot of records. And that was one of my joys, was playing the old Victrola and the records.

What kind of music on the records did you like?

Well, it's sort of a variety of music. My mother's first husband loved classical music, and she had a lot of his old records around that were classical, and I really enjoyed those. And then we had some of the blues and some of the different ones like that, the older ones.

And quite a bit of the early cowboy music, and I loved that. I just liked most any kind of music that came along.

What room would that Victrola be in, the living room?

No, I think it was probably back more in the bedroom where I was, because I remember taking the records out of the albums and I'd lay them on the bed, instead of putting them right back into the album. So my mother was always hollering at me, "You'd better pick up those records, because somebody's going to come along and sit down on them." And sure enough, one day my aunt came along and wasn't paying attention to what she was doing either, and she sat right down on one, of course, one of the best ones. So you know what I got in! "I told you so!"

Now, did your mother also help in the store?

Mostly my dad.

That was his full-time job?

Yeah, at that particular time, uh-huh, after the mine.

And your aunt was in the post office?

Yes.

And then did everyone eat their dinner together?

Oh yes.

Your mom took care of that?

Uh-huh.

What were some of the typical dinners?

Well, my mom just loved to cook, and we usually always had meat and potatoes and vegetables and a salad, if possible—which a lot of times wasn't—but we always had one or two vegetables and always a dessert. My dad had to have some kind of dessert always. And we had quite a bit of soup and beans and the staples.

Did she bake her own bread?

Yes.

And what kind of desserts were the family's favorites?

Oh, usually pies, I imagine—fruit pies and that sort of thing—cookies and cakes. And she was always making candy, fudge. I used to eat myself sick on that, because she always had a dish of it on the table. [chuckles]

Did you all help with dishes? Who did dishes?

Well, at that particular time, I think she did most of it, because she didn't want us [laughs] messing around. She wanted to get it done as quickly as possible. Later on, that was a different story.

Was she a fast worker, an energetic woman?

Oh yes. Well, she had worked in the boarding houses during World War I, and they had to make their own bread and pies and cakes and do everything from scratch back then, you know.

It just seemed a cinch.

Yeah, she just knew how to do it. She worked hard.

What kind of furniture was there in the house? Did it come with the furniture?

Yes, I believe so. Oh, I'm sure it wasn't very fancy. I don't remember, but I imagine a table and chairs for the dining room. There was nothing fancy. And the beds, as far as our beds were concerned, were just little, like folding cots, and had sort of a thin mattress on them.

Was there a little living room where you all would be after dinner? Would there be music? What did the family do in the evening, or were they so tired they went to bed early?

No, we usually sat around and read. My mother and dad were great to read, and they would read to us children.

Did you play games?

Well, we probably did. We probably had some kind of games, I really don't recall at that particular time.

What kind of stories would they read to you?

Well, I recall that we had a little book of Bible stories that my dad used to read to us, and at that time in our lives, it was mostly children's stories that they would read to us.

From the classic books?

Uh-huh. And then of course they were great to have the newspaper. And of course we got it like two or three times a week [chuckles] or something like that—we'd get a bunch of them. But my dad would sit down and he was very much into politics and interested in world affairs and things like that. So he would read to my mother different things from the newspaper

that he was interested in while she was sewing or embroidering, tatting, crocheting and that sort of thing. And he would read to her, so we sort of listened in and got a little education that way.

Kind of absorbed it.

Uh-huh.

Now tell me, I'm learning a little bit about your mom. Tell me a little bit about your dad as a person—not what he did, but what kind of a man and a father, worker, as you recall.

He was a small man, but he was a very, very honest man. He loved the out-of-doors. [with emotion in voice] He especially loved Nevada. He was one of the early-day cowboys and he used to take us out in the country and he would point out different spots where he had ridden horses, and how he was out on the ledge and the horse started to buck with him; how at one time in a big storm he was a cowboy and they didn't like the sheepmen, but he came across a shepherd's camp in this terrible storm—it was snowing and a blizzard—and he stopped and went into the shepherd's tent. The shepherd wasn't there, but there was a pot of lamb stew cooking on the stove, still warm, and so he got a pan and a spoon and he helped himself to it. He said that was the best food [laughter] he had ever eaten I [laughs] And coming from a cowboy that didn't like sheep! [laughs] He said he always blessed that shepherd. He never met him, but he always blessed him. He loved music. He would have just delighted if I had been able to learn to play the piano, but it was during the Depression and there just wasn't that kind of money. But he loved beautiful things. He loved pretty homes and admired pretty things.

And when we would go out in the country, he always pointed out the flowers and the clouds, the sunsets, the trees, and different things like that. He was a very friendly man, he enjoyed people. He believed in doing good to his fellow man and taking care of others.

Sounds like you had a father that you could really admire and probably you got a lot of things from him. One thing you said that I've heard about, and I want to hear more: Why didn't the cowboys like the shepherders and the sheep?

Well the cowboys had the western range pretty much to themselves. Then when the sheepmen came in, some of them were ranchers that had ranches and had their sheep and had range for their sheep. But then there were also these itinerant shepherders that had a little band of sheep and they went just wherever they could graze their sheep. Even with the other sheep, where they used to range them from north to south and they'd be north in the summer and go south in the winter, and they would trail their sheep. And the sheep have these little teeth that can get down to just the very umpteenth piece of grass, so they ate a lot of the grass. Plus their little feet trample the forage so that a lot of it is cut up and trampled into the ground.

And whose land was this that the sheep and cattle were on?

Well, most of it was just government land.

Did the cattlemen and sheepmen have to make arrangements with the government to cross that land?

No. At one time, no. Not until, I think it was Taylor Grazing [Act] came in, and

that's why so many—even the sheep and the cattlemen both hated the Taylor Grazing [Act] because that's when they started putting up the fences and putting up boundaries and that sort of thing.

The thing I'm confused...So the cattlemen didn't really have any more rights to that land than the sheepmen, right?

Only that they were here first.

Well, right. But I mean, it was open grazing land.

But legally it was open, public land.

Did they ever resolve it? Or they did later when they then had territories?

Well, the thing was that later on the cattlemen were having quite a bit of problems themselves, and then they could see where with the sheep they could have, they had their lambs to sell, they had their wool to sell, so they had two money-making propositions there, see. And so a lot of the cattlepeople bought sheep and went into the sheep business themselves.

And had both industries?

Uh-huh, until the sheep industry got into trouble in the thirties and the bottom dropped out. Then a lot of them had to go.

Okay, now I want to go back to the period of the store. I heard a little bit about your mother. She sounds like such a fascinating woman. Tell me a little more about your mother.

Well, my mother was a very attractive person.

Do you have photos?

Uh-huh. And she worked hard. She was always sort of an elegant lady. She was raised out in the mining camps and what-have-you, but she was always very careful about her dress and her appearance. She had an elegance about her [with emotion] and she was a real no-nonsense person. She believed in hard work, but she also loved beautiful things, especially flowers. She was a good seamstress and she could crochet and embroidered beautifully. She did tatting, which was never my bag. She was a very good cook. She was very proud of the fact that she could cook, and she was very efficient in the kitchen. She was, as I said before, the oldest of nine children, and so she was the caretaker of everybody. She was probably more a mother to some of her younger siblings than her mother was. Her younger brothers and sisters would come to *our* house, and some of them weren't that much older than I, where they were more like *my* brothers and sisters than they were like aunts and uncles. Everyone called her Lottie, and her younger brothers called her Lot. Whenever they had a problem, they came to see Lot. She was a very strong person. There were many deaths in her family—close loved ones. But she was always in control and always in command. She loved to read, and she loved her books. I still have a great many of her books. She said she worked in the boarding house for fifteen dollars a month, and she'd have to save up to buy her shoes, and they cost her like thirty dollars, and then the rest of them I think she bought poetry books [chuckles] and things like that, that I still have, but she loved her poetry. And in her own way, she was a very religious person, but she was a rather private person. She really leaned on the Lord and believed that he was there with her all the time, and that you just believed, and you asked, and you would receive.

It sounds like you really were fortunate to have two parents like that—especially in that early period, that they were both very cultured people. Now, you said you didn't stay at the store too long, the mine was closing.

Uh-huh.

Tell me what the next step for your family was.

Well, it was right during the Depression and it was very difficult to get jobs, so we moved back to Beowawe. We lived in, at that time, it was a one-room tie cabin. It was made out of railroad ties, and it had one room, and it wasn't really [laughs] very big. Then my uncle, my father's brother, who worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad—he was a brakeman.

What was his name?

His name was Norris Bertrand. Then we also had another uncle, Charlie Bertrand—they called him Bert—and he lived in Reno and he was also a brakeman on the Southern Pacific Railroad that went from Sparks to Carlin. But my Uncle Norris had never married and he used to come visit us every once in a while. And so he came and stayed with us and they put a partition down the middle of this one-room cabin, so now we had *two* rooms: we had a bedroom and we had a living/dining/kitchen area. And so then they took cement or whatever, and they chinked the cracks in between the ties to make it warm, and then I think my mother took the old—it was sort of a wallpaper, it was heavy and it came in rolls, and put on the inside of the house on the walls to keep the wind out.

Now, what was the move like, just from your experience, to move from where you were.

You weren't there that long, but you were in school and you were in a little bit bigger house and everyone had their job to do. Tell me a couple of things: what was it like? how did you feel about it? and did you already know people there? because you'd been living up and back.

Well, I had my uncle, my mother's brother, next to her, Andy Allen and his wife lived there. They had a grocery store there. Then we had my cousin Isabel and Paul Ryan—they lived there. And so we had relatives and friends that lived there.

How big a town was that?

It was small. It was a little railroad town and then there were a few ranches out from there. There were quite a few railroad people there at that time.

People who were transient people?

Well, no, actually they had lived there for a long time. It was what we called "section houses" where the railroaders that handled and took care of the railroad lived there.

Were there families?

Yes, there were families—a number of them were Mormon families.

Did they come as a group?

No, I think they just came over the years, different ones. And then someone would leave and then the other ones would come, but they were pretty stable, they were there for quite a while.

Where did you go to school?

We went to school in a little white, one-room school.

You were what, in about second grade?

Second grade. I was second grade, and it was a little white school, but we had to walk about a quarter of a mile to school. We had to go past what we called the “Indian camp” at that time, although the Indians were very nice people: they were all real, real good people. But they had a bunch of dogs and big old hound dogs and things, and some of them [laughs], they’d come out and bark us—they never did hurt us, but I was just a little timid of them at that time, because I wasn’t really very big.

Now did you walk by yourselves, or a bunch of kids walked together?

No, we walked by ourselves.

You and Frank?

Uh-huh.

Now, since you mentioned the Indian camp, did they have their own school, or did they go to school where you went?

No, they went to school where we went.

So it was an integrated school?

Uh-huh.

Now, in that school—a two-part question—How many students and how many that were not only Indian but of different ethnic groups, because I don’t know, with the railroad, if there were Mexicans there.

Yeah, we had Mexican children. We had probably there was only one family of Mexicans, I believe, and there was probably, oh, maybe five children from that family, the Gonzaleses. And they went to school there. And then the Indian children.

About how many Indian children, approximately?

Oh, there was probably, at least eight, I would imagine.

Were there any Chinese or black people working on the railroad who lived there?

Well, they would come in occasionally. They would bring in, when they had to do some extra work on the railroad, they would bring in railroad cars that the people lived in, and sometimes we would have black people that would come in there to work on the railroad. I think they called them [chuckles] gandy dancers* at the time—not just the black people, but whoever came to do that particular section of railroad, to put in new sections and what have you. But there were never any black children.

*Railroad workers used shovels manufactured by the Gandy Manufacturing Company of Chicago, Illinois. When it was necessary to lift the rail or a tie, a worker would wedge the blade of the shovel in the required spot, and apply pressure to the end of the handle, sometimes even standing on the handle and bouncing up and down to add leverage. To onlookers, it must have looked like the worker was dancing on the end of his Gandy brand shovel, hence the term “gandy dancer.”

*Maybe these workers didn't come with families?
Was it just the workers?*

Usually the workers. Well, and some of the times, their wives, and it would usually be in the summertime when the weather was good.

So then what was the approximate total number of children in this one school? We have the Indians and the Mexicans and how many of the Caucasians?

Oh, I'd say there was probably maybe, maybe twenty, I'm not sure.

So a bigger classroom. How long did you live in that two-room cabin?

Well, we lived there I guess for about a year, I think.

And then where did you live?

Well, while we were living there, my father was working at a mine out of Carlin that was called Lynn Creek Mine, and he was gone quite a bit of the time. But he was up on one of the loading ramps where the trucks would back up and then unload into the crusher. And he was standing up there, and he stepped back and fell off of the loading ramp and almost into the crusher. But he had presence of mind enough to jerk himself over, and he hit on his ribs and his back on the side of the crusher. And so he was in the hospital for a while. Then he couldn't go back to work, so he came home.

Where was the hospital he was in?

He was in Elko. That was the nearest hospital. Then he came home. Then my aunt who had one little boy there at Beowawe,

came and stayed with us because she was expecting another baby. And she stayed with us, so we had a big mattress that we put out on the floor, and my brother and I slept on the floor. So then she went to Elko to the hospital and my mother took care of the little boy, Little Dick. Then when she came back with the baby, she moved into another house there in Beowawe—she and her husband and children. Then my mother had a chance to move into a bigger house there in Beowawe, and she thought that maybe she could run a boarding house and maybe make some money that way. So the house had belonged to a lady by the name of Mrs. Webber, and there was a kind of a little complex there, and there were three buildings in a row: there was Mrs. Webber's house, which was a two-story, very nice home. She was an elderly lady, and she lived in that house. The building next door, in the middle of the two houses was the store building that my uncle had, and they lived in an apartment in the back of that. And then just about a car's width, or just a little road width between, and the house that we moved into, that also belonged to Mrs. Webber, we rented from her. It was quite a nice house, probably the nicest one that we had ever lived in. It had nice furniture and the Webbers had been ranchers at one time and very influential and had quite a good deal of money. So it had really nice furniture and carpets on the floor. It had three bedrooms, I guess, and then it also had another bedroom and a closed-in porch. And one of the teachers came with her two boys, and they stayed in that little apartment there, that was in connection with our house.

Let me ask you a few questions. Did your family buy the house?

No, they rented it from Mrs. Webber.

When your father was hurt and couldn't do the hard work, were there any benefits for injured people in those days?

No, nothing.

So there was no income any more?

No.

Now by this time, is your father home from the hospital?

Yes.

And your father and your mother and you and your brother lived in this house?

Uh-huh.

And then the teacher and the two children on the screened porch? Did that have a separate entrance? You said "apartment."

Yes, it had a separate entrance.

Did your mother then start a boarding house?

Uh-huh. Yes, she did, and I remember that we had, oh, a few people that went through and ranchers and sheepmen and people like that—mining people—that would come through. But it was sort of an isolated little place, off of the main highway, and so it wasn't really a very lucrative operation.

Would she have a sign out? Would she advertise with a sign anywhere?

It was just sort of by mouth.

How long did you live in that house? How long did she have a boarding house?

We were only there for I guess about maybe a year, year-and-a-half.

And then what?

Then we moved...It was on the same street, but it was east of there, and we had some friends that had lived there in Beowawe—they were my mother and dad's friends. And they had moved to Reno, and they had this building there that had at one time been an office building. And this was the same house that my folks had lived in when I was born. So we made it full circle. [laughter]

Was your father able to work by now?

Well, then while we were living there, then that's when the New Deal came about, when they had the WPA (Works Progress Administration). And then he got a job on that.

Doing what?

They were working on the roads.

And was he well by then, strong enough?

Well, he was well, but I don't think that he ever really recovered from it. Plus then he had angina, the heart problem where he had very serious angina pains.

So he went to work for the WPA. What did your mother do then?

My mother just stayed home and took care of the house. There was a lady there that came as a telegrapher to the depot there on the railroad. And she liked my mothers embroidery work, and I remember that she had my mother do a lot of embroidery, real

fancy work, for her, that she gave to her friends and things like that. So my mother did quite a bit of that. And then if there were men around there that were bachelors and they didn't have anyone to shorten their trousers and things like that, or their sleeves or something, and so they'd bring them to Mom and she would do the work on their clothes, sew their clothes, and things like that for them.

She was innovative and brought in additional income.

Uh-huh.

So now how long did you live there, while your dad was on the roadwork for the WPA?

Well, we lived there for, let's see, until I was about eleven years old, I believe.

So what was your life like in that period when you were coming up towards teen age? What was your personal life like?

Well, it was sort of a carefree sort of a life. And as far as moving, you asked me about what was it like to move from Cortez to Beowawe, you know, when I had friends and what have you. Moving has never really been a problem for me. I've always been curious and I enjoyed moving and I enjoyed seeing different things and different people, and so it's not been a problem for me. My poor brother, though! [laughs]

He didn't take to it?

No. [laughs] He was devastated every time we had to move, because he never liked to move. He got in one place, that's where he wanted to *stay*.

As you were getting towards eleven, what kind of [activities did you get involved in?] Did they start the baseball? Did you get into some sports? Or what were your activities?

We didn't have anything structured or like that or anything that they have now. We did our own thing. We didn't have any adults, for the most part, telling us what to do or how to play our games or this sort of thing. And the Humboldt River ran right in back of our house. And the railroad tracks ran right in front of it. There was just a small street in front. We climbed the hills and we swam in the river, and in the wintertime we skated on the river, and we made rafts. We'd take the old railroad ties and throw them in the river and nail them together, and we'd have poles and we'd go rafting on the river.

Did anyone ever drown on the river or get hit by a train on the railroad?

Not to my knowledge that they ever did. Our parents always told us, they warned us to be careful, and like rattlesnakes and things like that, they'd warn us. So we'd just go running out in the wild. If we saw a rattlesnake, we either let it go if it wasn't too close, or we might decide to kill it. The boys usually had to try and kill it.

How many of you kids would be playing like this? Was there a group?

Well, there in Beowawe there was one Basque family and the girl was about two years older than I, Emily Sansinena, and we played together quite a bit. But she had to work pretty hard. She had a little sister that was five years old, and she had to take care of her, and she had to help her mother. They had sheep and the two older brothers had to be out

with the father with the sheep. They had a little tie house there, and I used to spend quite a bit of my time there. But she had to stay home and work quite a bit. So I was out more or less with my brother and with the boys, and I was on the river and rafting and skating and pole vaulting and climbing the hills and whatever they were doing, I was doing. The other girls were the Indian girls, Mary Dan and Carrie Dan [now] having the controversy over the range there in Crescent Valley. Mary was one of my schoolmates. Her brother, Tommy, was there at school. He was a real nice boy, and he was quite an artist. He was killed in Alaska during the Second World War.

Oh dear.

But while we were living there at that house, I had two uncles that worked at the Horseshoe Ranch, which was just out of Beowawe, and over on the road toward the main highway. And my one uncle, Todd—Charles was his name, but everyone called him Todd—he had come out to the ranches to pick up wild horses and take them back to the Horseshoe Ranch. As he was crossing the railroad track on his way back to the ranch, his truck was hit by the Number Ten passenger train.

Oh gosh!

And he was killed. I think he was thirty-four years old.

No warning signals then?

Well, they didn't have the warning signals that they have now, no. But the fellow that was the telegrapher was in the depot and he was looking out, and he knew my uncle very well, and he said

there was nothing he could do. He could see him coming to the crossing and the train was coming, and he said in all the years that he had worked there, that Number Ten train, that was the first time that it had ever been on time. It was on time to the minute, the wind was blowing, it was cold and my uncle had no heater in the old truck and he had the sheepskin collar up around his ears, and he couldn't hear the train.

Oh, how heartbreaking. Now how long did you stay there in this house that we're talking about now? How long were you there?

Okay, then we were there until I was about eleven years old.

And then where did you go?

And then we went back to Cortez!
[laughs]

Now why did you go back to Cortez? Was the mining starting again?

Well, these friends, John and Vera Boitano—John had been raised in Cortez there, and he had married a teacher from Los Angeles, and they had gone to Los Angeles for a while, but then they decided they wanted to come back to Nevada. So they came back and he took a lease on one of the old mines there, and they were silver mines, I think, at that time. So he took a lease on that, and he needed someone to help him, so he asked my dad if he would come and help him.

Is this about 1935, if you were eleven?

Uh-huh. And so we moved back, we moved into a little different cottage at that time.

Was anyone else there, besides these friends and your family?

Well there were the Boitanos: they had three girls, Virginia, Georgia, and Jean.

What were they doing there?

Well, their dad was the one that had the lease. And their mother was a teacher. Vera was a teacher.

Okay, was there still enough children for a school?

There were six of us. And then there was the Guisti family, and let's see, Atillio Guisti was a half-brother of John Boitano's, but they had their own little home, and I don't know what *he* was doing. I don't think he was helping up at the mine, but I think he was working a turquoise mine, quite possibly.

Now, this friend John, did he take a lease on the mine?

Uh-huh. There were some people from New York that owned the whole thing, Cortez and all of the mines and everything.

What was the mining? Still the silver mines?

Uh-huh.

And was it successful? Did he find enough to make it successful?

Yes, they did pretty good. Well, it's still in the Depression, and the prices of gold and silver weren't very high. But we made it, we got by, and we enjoyed being there.

Was there a little store there that your parents had run and the post office?

It was there, and the Boitanos had it, and they had a few things in there, but not too much of anything.

And how long did you stay there at that time?

We stayed there until we graduated from grammar school. I was thirteen—two years.

Just a couple of years.

Uh-huh.

Is there anything different from before that you could tell us? We don't want to go into complete detail of those two years, but were there any changes or anything different to tell? Or did it just stay a few families, and you finished school?

Well, here again, it was a very carefree type of life. We didn't have too many restrictions, and not too many responsibilities or anything. It was just very carefree.

As you were getting through grammar school, did that go through...

Eighth grade.

Were you beginning to develop specific areas of interest that you thought you might want to pursue, or courses that you liked better than others, by eighth grade? That's usually a turning point.

Well, I think that I always enjoyed reading and art and English, probably better than anything else, but as far as specifics, I didn't really think too much about it.

What did your family do when you were thirteen?

Well, my mother and my brother and I went to Carlin for the winter months, for the school months. And then my dad worked there at Cortez. We still kept the house and everything there, and he was working there for John. And in the summer we would go back there.

Was it because school didn't go further than eighth grade up at the mine?

Right.

And how far was Carlin from the mine where your father was? How long did it take you to get from the mine to Carlin?

Well, over the old roads [chuckles] we had out there then, from Cortez to Beowawe was terrible! It was dusty and it was rutty and it was a terrible road from there.

Was Carlin further than Beowawe?

It was probably like seventy or eighty miles.

That far?!

Uh-huh.

Did you see each other weekends? When school was out? Would your father come up, or would you go back there, or did they not see each other through the whole winter?

Oh, we'd get together occasionally and for holidays my dad would come.

But not very often?

Not very often, no.

So you went to Carlin, your mother came. What did you live in there at Carlin?

Well, we lived right close to the school. It was across the highway from the school, and there was a fellow by the name of [O.F.] Zwingle that had what they called an "auto court" at that time. They'd be called a motel now, but they called it an auto court. And most of the cabins had kitchenettes in them. And we had one of the larger cabins, and it had one bedroom, a good-sized living/dining area, and a kitchen. And then they had a bathroom—the shower and the bathroom was a sort of a community affair. Everybody in the auto court used the same facilities. There was one for the men and one for the women.

Now when you started high school, what did your mother do during those years that you were there and she was away from your father?

She worked for the fellow that owned the auto court. She would make up rooms for him, and she also went up and worked at the service station. She sold gas and he had candy and different things like that, and of course auto supplies there. And so she'd take care of that.

What an enterprising woman she was! So going through the high school years, what are some of the highlights—not day-to-day—but just some of the highlights of your high school yearn? Let's start first with your studies.

Well, first of all, it was rather difficult for me to make new friends. I was a little shy and I really didn't have too much to talk about, and so that was a little of a problem when I first started. But as I continued school, it didn't

take me very long to get acquainted and to get into it. But my studies, I *really* enjoyed them. I thought it was wonderful, the general science, and we had a big old basketball coach that taught that, and he was just a really neat guy. I really enjoyed my general science. And then we had a little lady by the name of Miss Fitzpatrick that was our English teacher, and she was very Irish, and she spoke with an Irish brogue, and she was just the neatest lady. She had us writing stories and themes, and I just *loved* that. I just thoroughly enjoyed that. And I really did very good at it, because we'd have to read them in front of the class, so the kids always enjoyed mine. So I really enjoyed that. My typing and my commercial classes I enjoyed, but the teacher was such a taskmaster! Miss Marks, I think her name was, and *boy*, I mean she was *strict*! She'd never been married. But she was one of the old-fashioned ones, and she was very demanding, and *boy* you couldn't make one mistake on the thing, and you had to turn them in, and if there was one mistake on 'em, she circled it and you had to go back and [chuckles] do it over again.

Now, you were enjoying your studies. Did you develop a social life as a teenager? Did you start getting interested in fellas?

Well, not too much. I guess I'd been around the boys so much that they weren't [chuckles] I wasn't really romantically inclined. They were just one of the gang, you know! [laughter]

Were there dances?

There were dances, but I really wasn't real good at dancing. Well, I was too shy, I guess, about the fact that I was afraid I'd make a mistake. But we had basketball, which

I thoroughly enjoyed, and our gymnastics classes—I liked those. Then we had choir, which I liked. Then they had a band, and I wanted to play a clarinet, and the teacher didn't have any more clarinets, so she wanted me to play a flute [laughs], and it looked stupid to me! I didn't want to play a flute, so I didn't play anything. [laughs] Miss Summers, I guess she got disgusted with me. [laughter]

So, tell me about graduation.

Okay, now my brother decided after his sophomore year he did not want to go to high school any more. So my cousin—the same one, Isabel Ryan, from Cortez and Beowawe—she and her husband had moved over here. They'd picked their house up and just moved it over here.

When you say "here," where's here?

Here in Austin.

Okay, they picked up their house and moved it? The way they did in those days? [laughs]

Yeah, well, it was very unusual in those days, because it was a good-sized house, but he was in the trucking business, and so he just loaded his house on his truck and away he came. They came across the Carico Lake and the valley out west of Austin here, and they had to have two other trucks hook onto his to pull the house up the grade into Austin.

They didn't come up into these hills, I hope.

Yeah, they came right up Main Street. Well, they came up from this direction and came up from Main Street from the west.

They came up into these hills where all the houses are?

Uh-huh, right out on Main Street there. Let's see, where Tom White's house is now. I don't know whether you know where that's at. But it was right on Main Street.

They didn't have to come up into these dirt roads?

No, not up into here, no. No, they were right on Main Street.

Did they buy a lot before they brought the house?

Uh-huh.

So they moved here.

And for my junior year, then I came and stayed with them, in high school here in Austin.

Oh, you came here.

Yeah, in Austin.

Now, these relatives who moved to Austin, how were they related to you?

Isabel Ryan was my mother's first cousin. My mother's mother and Isabel's mother were actually half-sisters.

Where did they live before they moved to Austin? Where was this house that they moved?

They lived in Beowawe.

And what year did they move their house here to Austin?

I think it was about 1937. He was in the trucking business, and so he loaded the house on his truck and then brought it over.

What made them move to Austin, and move the house here?

Well, there was a little mining boom going in 1937, and he came over to haul ore in his trucks to the railroad from Austin.

So you left the high school you were going to and moved to Austin to live with your relatives in your junior year. Why did you decide to do that?

I came over here because my brother had decided he did not want to go to high school any more. So there was no use in my mother going there just for me, when I could come over here and stay with them.

And she could go back to your dad.

Yeah.

I see. Alright, now I understand. How did you feel about breaking away from your high school class?

Oh, here again, I was just sort of excited about something new and different. [chuckles] And I had some good friends, and so the ones I was really close friends with, we remained friends. I used to go once in a while. I spent my summers pretty much at my grandmothers ranch, and we used to go into Carlin once in a while and visit with them. So we remained close friends.

Did you come to Austin when school started, or that summer?

No, when school started.

Had you been to Austin before that?

Yes, just one time. We came to have Christmas with my cousins, with the Ryans—my dad and my mother and my brother and I—we came over. And that was in Christmas 1938.

And what year did you come up here for your senior year?

I came in September of 1939.

Okay, soon after. How did Austin appear to you when you first came? Tell me what it was like, especially compared to today. What was Austin like? What was your first impression?

Well, my first impression was just coming up the canyon and all. It was all so new and different, and I'd wanted to come to Austin for so long, because all of my relatives had come to Austin, they talked about it, and I had never come here, and I was always wanting to come. And I remember that my cousin took us for a ride and we saw the old castle [Stokes Castle] sitting out on the brow of the hill, just like it is now, and she pointed it out to us and said, "That's the castle."

Did it look the same as now? Was it as broken down?

Oh, it was pretty much the same. It still had the staircase and a portion of one of the floors.

Was it fenced around then?

No, and people used to go out there, and so they took all the staircases and everything out, because people were trying to climb up in it, and they were afraid they'd be hurt. So

they took that out. But it's pretty much the same. They've since fenced it, but at that time it was not fenced, no. Well, there were a lot of the old buildings here in Austin that are gone now. They were really unique little buildings and it's a shame that they were ever taken out. It's too bad.

Like what buildings?

Well, there were little store buildings, and they were the old, old-fashioned store buildings. You know, they had been just like they were when they were built. Some of them had been remodeled—they're still there. Some of them have fallen down, some of them have been torn out for other reasons. Some people just wanted the vacant lots for parking spots. Then some of them, like the little old railroad depot, they tore it down so that they could put a service station in there on Main Street. Because you know the narrow gauge from Battle Mountain used to run up the main street of Austin, and they had a little depot there between the courthouse and the Episcopal Church.

Did you ever ride that little train?

No, I think it was about 1937 when it went out of commission, when they stopped running it.

Was it for people to ride to Battle Mountain?

Uh-huh.

Oh, what fun!

ES. And it had ore cars that carried the ore from the mines here to Battle Mountain to the railroad.

And a passenger car?

Uh-huh. My mother said that she rode it in 1917. Her husband John Hamlin, had to come here for trial at the courthouse here, and they rode the little train. She said that it was just the one car, and in the corner was a barrel for water, and there was a dipper, and everybody used the same dipper. [laughs]

Now, when you came, was the train still running?

No. It had stopped running I think in 1937.

Was the train itself there?

No.

So that was not part of your first impression?

No. The old engine house was still here.

And the depot?

Yeah, and the depot, and then they tore that down, put a service station in. And then the old engine house was up where the park is now. But it was adobe and it finally just fell to ruin.

Now you came and you settled-in to live here for your junior and senior high school years.

My junior year, yes, but I didn't stay with them my senior year.

Alright, let's go back. Then you only did your freshman and sophomore...

In Carlin.

In Carlin, okay.

And I stayed with my cousin when I was a junior here. But then the next year I did not stay with them.

Lets go through your junior year—don't rush! [laughs] Alright, you came and you lived with them for one school year. Was that school the school that's over here, right near where you live?

Yes.

And where was your cousins' house?

Their house was on Main Street. It was near where the old Forest Service buildings are.

Oh yes, I know that. And did you know any of the students when you first came? Or were they all strange to you?

I knew one, Emma Hammond. She had lived in Battle Mountain, and one of the teachers in Carlin had brought her up there for a junior prom or something, and I had met her then. But she was the only one that I knew.

Now, because you had already been to a high school that you found the subjects so fascinating, compare it with the junior year here, what the school was like and the teachers here.

Well, I wasn't as happy. There again, I guess it was a problem of having been with my parents and my mother so much of the time, and then all of a sudden I was sort of cast out [chuckles] with somebody else.

And so young.

Yes. And I really loved my cousin—I thought she was, well, she was sort of a role model for me. She was a very attractive person and a very competent person and I really always admired her very much. But her husband was a big, handsome man, and he was a very nice man, but he was a rather rigid sort of a person and we hadn't sat down and talked out about any rules or regulations or what I was supposed to be doing or what was expected of me, or anything like that and so I was sort of always...Oh, I had the feeling of being a [chuckles] poor step-child or something, although they never meant to treat me that way. It was probably just more the way that I felt about it.

Did they have children in the house?

They had one boy.

And how old was he?

He was four years younger than I was.

Quite a bit younger.

Yeah. Oh, let's see, he was probably ten, somewhere in there.

Did you have chores or have to take care of him?

No, no, he was around ten years old. He was a great big boy. So we were pretty good buddies, and he played the piano and we sang. We had a lot of good times, but I never felt really comfortable, and I was never sure of my place.

Oh. Always a little bit on edge?

Yeah. And then school was totally different. It was a different atmosphere. And

although I really enjoyed the kids and made some real good friends. The teachers were different, there wasn't the discipline, I think is what it was. It was just not the discipline that there was in Carlin.

Was the caliber of the subjects and the teaching of the subjects as high as it was in Carlin? You told such glowing reports.

No, it really wasn't. We had one teacher that was very good, very competent. What happened here was that they had to teach subjects that they were not qualified to teach, because they had majored in one thing, minored in another, but then when they came here, in order to keep their job, they had to branch out and teach other classes that they were not really qualified to teach.

Now I've been wondering, looking round the town, what did kids that age, upper teenagers, do for recreation in Austin?

Well, we had a theater here at that time.

Live theater?

No, not a live theater.

A movie theater?

A movie theater. It was really a very nice building. It's where the Owl Bar is right now. But it was really a very nice theater.

What happened to it?

Well, eventually there just weren't enough people to support it. The fellow that owned the Austin Garage, he finally bought it, and there were some people from Ely that had theaters

in different towns around this area. And so then when the boom was over again, why Lee Maestretti, who had the Austin Garage, bought it. And he had been the one who had run the movies. So he bought it and so he kept it going for a number of years after that. But eventually it got to the point where when television came in, he had it just Saturday night, but even at that, just no one would come. So they closed it.

Were there dances?

Oh yes, uh-huh.

Where would they have the dances?

Well, in the old Austin Hotel that burned. They had a great big ballroom up there, and Millie Acree and Bert Acree—he was the County Recorder/Auditor, and he played the drums, and Millie played the piano. They would sit and play all night long for us, until they'd say, "Well, guess we'd better quit." And we'd say, "Oh no, Millie, play it 'til daylight, 'til the sun comes up." So she'd sit and play 'til the sun came up. So we'd dance all night. So we had good times there. Then there was a little place—it's on the corner now—it's called, I don't know, "The Pub," or the "Austin Saloon" or something, but there was an old Basque couple that had that, and it was called "Celly's Place." And his name was Celedonio Barainca, so that's where the Celly came from. He had a bar there, but he also had a soda fountain and a lunch counter. And they had a nickelodeon, and so that was the gathering place for the school kids, and we'd go in there and have our cokes and play the nickelodeon and dance and that sort of thing.

Sounds like fun. Did you have any special boyfriends that you liked at the time you were starting to dance?

Well, when I came to Austin, I think that I sort of got a real crush on a young Basque fellow here. He was beautiful: he had dark curly hair, and he was a senior. Of course nobody knew that I had this crush on except *another* girl, and she was Basque too. I told her, but I threatened her with her life if she so much as breathed a word of it. So nobody knew this. And he had no idea that I had a crush on him. And the strange thing about it after *he* graduated from high school and he went to University, and he came back here and *I* was a senior, then he got a crush on *me* [laughs] and I wouldn't even look at him! [laughter]

Did you dance with him? Did he ask you to dance?

Yeah, yeah, we used to dance. Everybody danced with everybody.

You decided not to stay here for your senior year?

No, I stayed here, but I just stayed someplace else. [laughs]

Oh, you went here for senior year in Austin!

Uh-huh. But while I was living with my cousin in my junior year, I had just turned sixteen in February of 1940, and then my father died in the first part of March. He and my mother were living at this little mining camp of Mill Canyon, which was just north of Cortez. He had a heart attack. And so then my mother was sort of at loose ends, and she came out to my grandmother's ranch and stayed there. And so when I came back to school, I had this very close friend, Eileen Givens, and her mother had the little, where Carol's Country Kitchen is now, she had a little dry

goods store in that bottom part where you come in the door—just the bottom part—the other was partitioned off. And she had a little dry goods store there, and her son, Bill, that is married to Carol, went to University. He had graduated the year before, and he went to University, and so his mother—her name was Edith, but they called her “Honey,” Honey Givens. And so Honey said, “Well, why don’t you come...” She couldn’t remember my name, Estelle, so she called me “the girl.” She said, “Well you come and stay with Eileenie and I.” So I went and stayed my senior year with Honey Givens and her daughter Eileenie.

How did your cousins feel about you moving to a different place? Did they feel relieved or insulted?

Well, I think it was sort of a mutual thing. Well, we had had some good times, and they had taken me with them, and they traveled quite a bit different places around the country and stuff. And they had taken us to basketball games. We had quite a basketball game, the girls’ team. And they took us to different games and things like that, and they seemed to enjoy that. But I think it was sort of mutual when we decided that I’d not go back again. So I went and lived with Honey and Eileen, because Mother had kind of planned on coming in anyway, to Austin.

Let me back up a little. Her store was there, but where dad they live, and where did you go to live? In the store? Or was there a house?

No, they lived up on the street back of the Austin Hotel, Court Street, that runs below the Catholic church.

Now I’m a little confused. Did she talk to you, or to your mother, or to your cousins?

No, no—Mother. Mother came in and she and I.

Oh, your mother came in.

Yeah. My mother came in from the ranch and we made arrangements.

Did your mother know the Givens?

Oh yeah.

Oh she knew them.

Oh yeah, we knew them.

And was her plan to come back and live here?

Yeah, she had planned to come in and live, but then for my first semester, I stayed with Honey Givens.

Who is Eileenie?

That was Bill Givens’ sister, Eileen Givens. She was in the same grade I was. She was a senior in high school also, Eileen.

Okay. So how was that senior year?

It was kind of neat.

Or at least the semester before your mother came.

As far as the school was concerned, it was pretty much the same. But we had a basketball team that was *excellent*. We changed coaches, and we got some real good coaching, and going from the year before we had a team that we played eleven games and lost ten. And for my senior year we played eleven games and we only lost one game *that* year. And we played pretty much the same teams around the state.

Where would you play?

Well, we played Goldfield and Manhattan and Battle Mountain and Dayton. But I think we played Dayton at Gardnerville. And of course then those teams all came here.

That must have been exciting!

It was! It was wonderful. We really had quite a good time.

So now when did your mom come?

She came my second semester of my senior year.

Then where did you live with her?

Then we lived...I think it was down on Paul Street.

Did you rent a little place?

Uh-huh.

I bet you were thrilled to have her come.

Yeah, it was nice to have her.

How were her spirits?

Well, it was very difficult for her because it hadn't been too long, I guess, since my dad had passed away, and she missed him and everything was sort of topsy-turvy. Of course, I being a teenager, and my brother had stayed at the ranch and worked out there. So I think she was kind of lonely.

At loose ends?

Yeah, kind of at loose ends. And then, let's see, I think that year, I'm not sure, I think she went to work in the post office. I don't know whether it was that year—it was probably the next year. But later she went to work. But that year, I think it was rather difficult for her, because like I said, I was a teenager and I had my life and my friends and so I was out quite a bit with my friends and things like that.

How old was she?

The thing was that she didn't really have much money. My dad, when he died, he left a little, he had a little life insurance, you know. But she didn't have too much to go on. And of course I realized that, but you know when you're young, it doesn't mean that much to you. But I know that she was having a rather difficult time.

How old was she then, about?

Well, let's see, that would have been 1941. Well, she was thirty years older than I, and I was seventeen when I graduated from high school, so she was about forty-seven, close to fifty.

Of course today, that's young.

Well, yeah. She wasn't old. My mother lived to be ninety-seven years old, but to her, she still was not old. [chuckles]

Is she still alive?

No she died about three years ago.

So she was really just middle aged [when you were in your senior year of high school]. So first I want to learn a little more about your life,

and then we'll follow Mama. So this was your senior year that you were finishing.

Right.

So then tell me about graduation.

Well, there were ten of us that graduated from high school: There were five boys and five girls, and that was the largest graduating class that ever graduated from Austin. That was in 1941, and since that time, there's only been one larger graduating class, and that was eleven children. [chuckles]

Oh my!

We had blue caps and gowns, and Millie Acree played the processional and the recessional, and each one of us I think had an opportunity to make a short speech. And so I remember making my speech. I felt real good about it. The year before, I think when I was living with my cousin, I had written a speech for a Lions Club contest, or one of those things, and I really flubbed because I didn't really dare practice at their house, so I flubbed. When they said, "make a speech," I thought, "Well, I'm not going to flub this time." [laughter] So I *really* worked at it until I knew it by heart, I'll tell you.

Was there a prom?

Yes, we had a prom.

Who did you go to the prom with, do you remember?

I don't remember who I went to the senior prom with, but I remember who I went to the *junior* prom with. [laughs]

Was there a junior prom?

Junior prom, uh-huh. The juniors always had a prom every year.

Who did you go with to that?

Well, there was a fellow who came from Fallon, a young man that came from Fallon, and I went with him.

You mean he came purposely for the prom?

Uh-huh, for the prom.

Where'd you meet him? From Fallon? How'd you know him?

No, he just came to the prom. Some of the young people knew him, and he used to come to Austin. You know, they'd go fishing and all this sort of thing, out around this area, and I had met him before.

So did you ask him to the prom, since it was your class and not his?

I guess it was a mutual thing. [laughs]

In other words, he knew it was the prom and you were kind of going together?

Well, we weren't really going together. I think he sort of had. He kind of liked me, but then I was living with my cousin and I really didn't have too much freedom. I didn't want to make waves or rock the boat, and so I didn't... And then he wanted me to come to Fallon to go to the prom down there with *him*. but I told him, "No, I'm afraid to ask my cousin." [laughs]

But then he came up here.

Yeah, he came.

But the senior prom, that was someone who didn't leave any impression whatsoever? [laughs]

[laughs] No, I don't remember that too much.

Okay, so now tell me pretty quickly, move your mom into her activities that year. Take me through, quickly, her first year here.

Well, she pretty much stayed at home and like I say, she spent quite a bit of time embroidering and doing that sort of thing. But there weren't too many jobs or anything around then. There was a little lady that was cleaning rooms at the International Hotel, and I think that she went down and helped her. And then when she was gone, she would help there. But she got around and visited all the time.

Did she start to join any of the women's organizations?

Well, they didn't have too many at that particular time. Later on, she stayed and eventually she worked in the post office for two or three years, and then she ran for County Treasurer in 1944, and took office in January 1945. So then that was after the Second World War and they had the Legion Auxiliary and they had the Rebeccas that she joined, and different things like that.

Let's back up quite a bit here. The war came along. Were you still here? Did you stay here after you graduated high school?

Okay, what happened then, I think my mother did not stay here. Seems like she went

back to the ranch. Well, I went to Reno. This friend of mine from Carlin was going down to go to business college. In fact, a couple of the girls from there were. And I went down to go to business college. But like I said before, my dad had left a little life insurance, but there just wasn't enough. The whole thing was really too much for me—being in a much larger place and a larger school, and then having to try and find someplace to stay.

And having to go to work.

Yes! And the thing was, I wasn't *really* qualified. The fellow that ran the business college had a lady that wanted me to go take care of her children and take care of the house. She had a couple of very small children that I just was not qualified for that, because I'd never done anything like that.

So what did you do?

Well, I stayed for about three months, I guess, and then I just came on home.

Where was home?

Well, my mom had gone back to my grandmother's ranch, so I went there. And then there was a job came up in the bank here in Austin, and so I came to Austin and went to work in the bank.

Where did you live then, when you came back to go to work at the bank?

The place that's now called the Pony Canyon Motel was King's Auto Court at that time, and I had a cabin there when I first came.

I see. So you came, and how long did you work in the bank?

I worked there for about a year.

And then?

Well, what happened was that they were—that was in early 1942 I guess—and they were just building this airport, constructing the airport down here, and it was a big...

Where is the airport?

It's down in Reese River Valley here, just about twelve miles from Austin. They constructed a very large airstrip because it was right on the route that the big bombers took, and they wanted an emergency airstrip that those big bombers and big carriers could land on in an emergency. So there was a fellow came to work on the airport. He was a heavy equipment operator—what was called a "catskiner." [laughs] And he ran a Caterpillar and a [bull]dozer. He stayed in one of the other cabins at the motel there.

Here?

Here in Austin, uh-huh. So somehow we got acquainted.

Was he close to your age?

No, he was about thirteen years older than I. I went out one evening with him and he had to go to work. Well, no, somebody else had taken me down. There was several young people, and we went down and he was working. They had the big lights on, it was dark, and they had the big lights on and lots of dust and everything. And so he was on this Caterpillar and so I just went over and climbed on the Caterpillar with him, which I'm sure was not kosher. I'm sure you weren't supposed to do that. But anyway I

went over there and I got on the Cat and I was on there quite a while with him. And it was marvelous. I loved that. The *power* that thing had! Oh! And he was such a good operator. He was almost like part of the machine, and he knew *exactly* what he was doing. I just really admired how he could work that machine, and that power that that thing had. Oh, I just was...It was wonderful.

Where did he come from to work on this?

He came from California. He had followed construction for years. He worked on highways and all kinds of projects like that.

So what happened to you two?

Well, so then we decided we'd get married.

How long did you know him?

Oh, let's see...Pretty close to a year, I guess.

That whole time were you both here at this motel, and you were in the bank?

Well, they closed the motel, and I think he went and stayed at the Austin Hotel—then, I think it was the Hogan Hotel, as I recall. Then I had to move because they were closing the motel for the winter, and they wanted to turn the water off and everything. And so then I moved into a little house up close to the Methodist Church, I guess—rented a little house up there, and stayed there. And then while I was there, then Mom came into Austin again. And *that's* when she went to work in the post office.

Now, two things: First, your mom met...Your husband is Wayne Roberts?

Roberts, uh-huh.

And your mom met him? Did she like him?

Well, we had made a couple of trips out to the ranch.

So she was agreeable to your marrying? You were just nineteen.

Oh yeah, well she was nineteen when she got married the first time too. [laughs]

Okay, she couldn't tell you that.

Yeah, well she didn't know too much about him, you know, so she was kind of apprehensive. But then she said, "Well, what are you going to do?" [laughs]

Did you learn a lot about him?

We went down to California and met his folks, and I really liked them. His mother and step-father were originally from Missouri, and they were just the neatest people. Oh, they laughed and joked, and they were so glad to see us.

Welcomed you into the family?

Oh yeah. They were just really great. His mother and I, we just got along so good.

Where did you get married?

We got married in Reno?

Okay, then where did it lead your life?

Well, then we went to Westwood, California.

Did you both stay here until he finished his work at the airport?

Yeah.

And how long was that?

Oh gee, I don't remember now. But then we left here. I'm not sure whether the airport was finished or not. But we left here, we went to Westwood, California, and he went to work in the logging camp there, skinning cat, downing trees with the Caterpillar.

Now we're not going to go into your life there at all, because we want Lander County.

Okay, but what I was going to tell you is, so that I can get *back* here again...So while we were there, he had enlisted in the Seabees, the Navy Seabees. The war was at it's height right then, and he had enlisted in the Navy Seabees. We had to go from there to Fresno, California for his induction. And then from there he went to Salt Lake. Then from there he went to Norfolk, Virginia.

Did you go all over with him?

No, I went to Salt Lake, and then he went on, but then I came back *here*, and Mom was living here. So I stayed here. And then he went to Gulfport, Mississippi, and they thought he was going to ship out from there. So he called and I went to Fresno where his mother was, and then she and I went to Los Angeles, and then took a train from there to Gulfport, Mississippi. So then I stayed there with him a couple of months, and then he didn't ship out from there. They shipped him then to Port Hueneme, California I stayed in Fresno 'til he came out there. Then I went down to Ventura

and stayed there until he shipped out from Port Hueneme.

How long a period of time was all this traveling around?

Let's see, I went back there in, like the first part of November. Then he came out too. We were there until the end of December 'til January or so. Then he came out here.

Was it a year?

No.

Just a few months?

Just four or five months, is all. So then he shipped out from Port Hueneme to Pearl Harbor. I came back here, Mom was here, she was working in the post office. And so I was pregnant! [laughter] So my husband then went into the South Pacific and was with the Marines. They'd go in and secure the beaches and then they'd go in and build airports.

Was your baby born here without Daddy around?

Uh-huh.

Luckily your mama was with you.

Uh-huh, and she was born in Fallon.

Oh, you went over to Fallon. Did everything go okay?

Fine, no problem.

And what was your little girl's name?

Barbara Joanne.

I'll bet your mother was thrilled to be a grandma.

Oh my goodness, she just took her over! I didn't even know I had a daughter when she came down with a friend. She didn't drive, so this friend of ours, she got her to take her down. And so when we were ready to come home, why, she took ahold of Barbara like this, and she got ahold of her and she sat in the back seat with me. I wasn't even little sister! You know Mom, she was like in seventh heaven! She was the mom, you know. It was *her* baby! [laughs] The driver, poor Helene, she's sitting up in the front like this chauffeur! [laughs]

Then from Fallon you came back here to live?

Uh-huh.

Did you live with your mother then?

Yeah.

She had a little house you rented?

Uh-huh.

Now how long was it before your husband returned?

He came back in, let's see, Barbara was born in August of 1944. He came back in November of 1945.

Okay, so during that year, you were mama to baby. Your mother was working in the post office?

Yes. And my grandmother had come in from the ranch and was staying...

Oh she stayed with you too?

That one winter, uh-huh.

So all the women were together? Four generations!

Yeah.

So now did you leave Austin when he came back?

Uh-huh.

And I don't want to cover the years that you were away. Just where did you go to live, without details.

We went to California for a while, and then they wanted to go in the well-drilling business, he and his step-father, so then we bought house trailers, we went to Idaho. They went into the well-drilling business, and that didn't work out too good. So then we followed construction for a while, and then we came back to Austin, stayed here for a while. He worked on the highway. They were paving the highway to Battle Mountain. We lived in Round Mountain, we traveled around quite a bit.

How many years did you travel?

Anyway, to make a long story short, it just wasn't working out and we were living in Round Mountain. Then I came back to Austin, put the little girl in school and he went...

How old was Barbara then?

She was six.

Okay, so you'd been traveling around for six years. You came back with a six-year-old.

Yeah. And so then anyway he went to California with his mother. Ultimately we got a divorce and so I stayed here and I worked different restaurants and things like that.

I'll bet first your mother was happy to have you and granddaughter back, right?

Oh yes, uh-huh.

Did she take care of Barbara? Well, Barbara was in school by then?

Uh-huh. Right. And in the meantime, in 1944, like I say, my mother had run for County Treasurer. And so she was County Treasurer then from 1944 until 1956.

So in her years here, she made a mark for herself. And you were still all living together.

Uh-huh.

So you were working at different jobs until you settled into something that you really wanted to do so you could earn your living and support your daughter?

Well, I took a job cooking at the International Restaurant, and I didn't really plan on staying there, but it was about the only thing that was available as a job at that particular time. And while I was working there, I met this young cowboy that came from one of the ranches, the Race Track. He was working there, and he used to come in, in the evening. I met him there.

What was his name?

His name was Laurence Saralegui, and so we started going together. Then in about 1952, I think January 1952, my mother and I bought

the little soda fountain, lunch counter and bar on the corner of Main and Virginia Street. We called it Mom's Place, and Mom used to make the pies and the chili and we had quite a little restaurant business going there when we really didn't have the equipment or anything, but we didn't have any other restaurant in town except the one over in the Austin Bar. People didn't like to have to go through the bar to get there. And then we had the soda fountain, and the theater was still going at the time, the movie theater, so Saturday nights were quite an affair. People would come in to have their ice cream and refreshments before and after the movie.

Where was your daughter when you were doing all this at night?

We had an apartment upstairs.

Oh, you moved upstairs from it. How did you get the money to buy a place?

Well, the people that owned it desperately wanted to sell it, because they had already moved and they had it leased, but they wanted to sell it. And so it wasn't really too difficult. I raised enough money, I had enough money to buy the little inventory the fella that was leasing it had. And then Mother came up with a little bit, and so we put it together. Nowadays it wouldn't sound like very much. It was quite a bit then. I think I paid \$10,000 for the place. Recently someone bought it and paid \$70,000 for the same place! And it hasn't been improved that much! [chuckles]

Was it a big enough apartment upstairs? Was it the three of you living there?

Yeah. Of course Laurence and I didn't get married until May of 1952, so he was still at

the ranch. But Mom came down and stayed for a while to help me out, because I wasn't really...She was more proficient at all this sort of thing. And so then my daughter went up and stayed with Mom, because Mom was alone. So they kind of buddied-up and stayed there together.

Stayed at your mom's place?

Uh-huh. And then Laurence and I got married in May of 1952.

How long had you known him?

Oh, I'd known him...it was pretty close to a year, I guess.

Did he want you to go back to the ranch with him?

No. No, he continued to work on the ranch.

He commuted?

Yeah, it wasn't very far. It's only about seven miles or something like that. Well, Mom, of course, was stilt County Treasurer at the time. So I hired a couple of high school girls to help me. So we ran the place, and then when Laurence came in, in the evening, why, he would tend bar and the fellas, the buckaroos from the ranch usually came in. Some nights they had an all-night session, he'd come in, take off his hat, wash his hands and still have his work clothes on in the bar.

Did he stay in the apartment?

Yes.

And did Barbara stay with your mother?

Then Barbara pretty much moved down with us after that.

How did your new husband and daughter hit it off?

They got along fine. Yeah, they just seemed to, just to take to each other. They enjoyed each other.

Wonderful.

Yeah. And he was real good with her, and she liked him very much.

So your life was kind of fulfilled now.

Uh-huh. Yeah, it was.

And how long did you run this place?

Well, we had it for two years, and then some friends of ours from Battle Mountain came and said, "Well, the Commercial Hotel and cafe and bar are for lease. The fella that is doing that now has to leave because of his health. Why don't you come down?" And of course at that time Battle Mountain was still—they had several mines that were operating at the time. So we went down and leased the Commercial Hotel, bar and cafe and we had that for about three years. And then all the mines closed! [laughs]

Now wait, you moved to Battle Mountain?

Uh-huh.

Then did your husband, instead of working at the ranch, work with you there?

Uh-huh.

And Barbara went with you, of course.

Uh-huh.

Was that adjustment fine? Did she adjust fine?

Yeah, we did fine, yeah. Of course I knew a lot of people in Battle Mountain, and my mother and dad had lived there for years and they had old friends there from way back. And I'd heard them talk about them, and I'd met some of them. And I belonged to the Episcopal Church and they were quite active, the ladies there. And so we joined in there and got along fine there. And the school, they were busy. My daughter had a lot of friends, and they'd all come to the house and play dolls and sew and all this sort of thing. Yeah, we had a nice time.

Did you live at a separate place?

Yes.

It was a little house? Rented?

Yeah, we rented a little house from an old Basque couple, and they were real sweet. They were like grandma and grandpa, and they were just real sweet people.

Several questions, because that's all part of Lander County: What was Battle Mountain like when you lived there? And tell me a little about the kind of activity that was going on during that period.

Well, there was quite a bit of ranching going on then, and some big ranches. Of course the Marvels, Louise Marvel and her husband Kent Marvel owned some really big ranches, and their sons of course were grown and had

families of their own, but they were part of the ranching operation too. One of them took care of the business, one took care of the cattle ranches, one took care of the sheep operation. And there were a lot of the Basque shepherders and people around there. Savals had a big ranch out in Buffalo Valley. Their employees, the buckaroos and the sheepmen and all would come to town. And of course the Commercial Hotel for many, many years was owned by Basque people. And of course Lawrence was Basque. So it was sort of the gathering place for the ranchers and the cowboys. We had quite a few of the Mexican people that came in, because my husband could speak Spanish and he could communicate with a lot of them that couldn't speak English. Having the hotel and what-have-you, why they congregated there. Then we opened up the back dining room and we served Basque family-style dinners.

What a lively life! Tell me a little bit about this new introduction, marrying into a Basque family. Did you learn new things? Or what can you tell me about...I know there's such a closeness, and the language, and I've been interviewing some Basques where in their home they still spoke Basque, especially the older ones. What did you experience in this new life that's truly Basque experiences?

I loved it! I just loved it, it was so neat, I really miss it. Of course my husband was raised—his father had come over from the old country, and his mother also, but he had big ranches and he had cattle and sheep. My husband was the oldest of four children, and he had two brothers and a sister younger than he. Their mother died when he was ten years old. She died of the Spanish flu also. And so I don't know, it was just sort of a different world. Of course I told you in

Beowawe the Sansinena family that I had spent quite a bit of time at *their* house. And so it wasn't completely new to me. I had gone out to the sheep camps with her and her dad and different things like that. So it wasn't completely new to me. But I loved it. We would go to town and we'd go to the Basque hotels. His sister still had the family ranch out towards Portola, California there in Long Valley. And she never had any children, and we had adopted these two little boys and she really took a fancy to them, and she got along good with my daughter, Barbara, and we just had some real good times out at the ranch. Her husband was from France. They were just real sweet people. We just had a real good time. The brothers would come there and their families and we'd have Thanksgiving and what-have-you together. It was just really neat.

Did they speak Basque? or did they speak English?

Oh, they spoke Basque and English also—especially the sister. Of course she had had sheepmen and what-have-you, you know, she'd hired over the years. And so she spoke Spanish fluently.

But Spanish isn't the same as Basque.

No, no—well she spoke Basque.

And Spanish?

And Spanish, and my husband did too. And a little French. Her husband *was* from France. He was a Frenchman right from France.

Uh-huh, like the Inchauspes.

Yeah.

*You just quickly said, "we adopted two sons."
When and why did you do that?*

Well, we had the little girl, and we never seemed to be gonna have any of our own, so my Aunt Kate, my mother's sister next younger to her, had three daughters. And the middle daughter had these two little boys, and she had an alcohol problem, and her husband also had an alcohol problem, and they would abandon the children.

Oh, so they were children in the family then.

Yeah, they were my cousin's children.

Oh, it wasn't where you went out to an adoption agency.

No, they were my cousin's children, and my aunt had had to go get them from a foster home again and again, and finally they couldn't find where her daughter was and where their mother was, and so she was going to put them up for adoption, "Because," she said, "I know that this is going to keep going on." And I heard just sort of via the family grapevine that she was going to do that. And so I asked my husband, "Would you like to have a couple of little boys?" and he said, "Sure."

Oh, he's a loving man!

Yeah, he loved children. So they were living in Idaho, so my mother and my daughter and I went up and got them.

And how old was your daughter when these little boys came into the home?

She was twelve.

And how old were the boys?

The oldest one was two years old the day we went and got him, and the younger one was ten months.

Oh, so they were little babies.

Yeah.

How did she feel about that?

Oh, she loved them. She was just thrilled to death. But then when we'd go over to the restaurant and what-have-you, like the old Basco fellas that'd sit around there, they called her "Bahbahrah" and they'd give her money and they'd talk to her. But then when we got the boys, why then they sort of...Then she said, "Well, you know I knew I shouldn't be jealous, but I just couldn't help it!" But she loved them. She just took to them and she took care of them and she just loved them.

Do you have anything more about the experience in Battle Mountain that could reveal to people wanting to know what it was like then? The war was over, and was mining booming then?

It was when we were there. There was the Tungsten mine and the Getchell Mine and Natomas and Copper Canyon were all working. And the miners would come. When they came to Battle Mountain, why, they'd come over to the Commercial and come in, because they had a big time with my husband—he was always kidding and joking and laughing with everybody. He was so full of life, he was so enthusiastic about life. He loved people and he just...He was just so full

of life, even to the very last, just still was so enthusiastic about life.

I'll bet you adored him! That was before [Highway] I-80 was moved out of the main part of town, right?

Uh-huh, right.

It came through Main Street?

Main Street, right.

So it probably was a much more bustling, busy, trafficky kind of town?

Yes it was.

Did that bring more business into town, people stopping, going through Battle Mountain?

Oh yeah, definitely yes, very much so.

Now where the Commercial Hotel was, what is there now?

Well, there's still a bar there. I don't know whether they have any rooms open or not, but the cafe they've closed. I don't know really who owns it. There were some Basque people by the name of Itza owned it, or had it leased for a while. But I think the Belausteguis probably still own it.

Is it still called Commercial Hotel?

No, they changed it.

What's it called? When I go I can see the building.

I really don't know. You know where the Owl Club is?

Oh yes.

Okay, the Owl, and then there's a hardware store east of that, across the street, and then the place right next to that.

On the other side of the street?

No, it's on the other side of the street from the Owl. You cross the street and there's a hardware store there. And then the hotel. It's a two-story building that's there. And there's a bar, and I think the cafe is closed—has been for a long while. I'm not sure what it is. It was "I" or "B," or I don't know what it was. Itza's for a long time, but I can't remember now.

Now, how long did you stay in Battle Mountain?

Three years.

And business was real good?

Uh-huh. For the first two years it was *real* good, and then the last year the mines closed.

And so people were leaving again?

Uh-huh. And the lease that we had, the rent was so high, and when the mines closed and we asked if they would reduce the amount of the lease, they wouldn't do it, so we couldn't justify staying, because we couldn't afford it.

So what did you do then?

We came back to Austin! [chuckles]

Okay.

In the meantime we had leased this building that we had here, Mom's Place. And

then there was a lady that was going to buy it, but she couldn't handle it, so then my husband said, "Well we'll go back and..." In fact, we were about ready to move to Winnemucca, and then when she said, "I can't handle it," we had to take it back. So he said, "Well, we'll go and we'll remodel it. We'll just have a bar and maybe it will sell. We'd like to sell it. And we'll call it the Black Cat." And I said [crying], "Oh, I don't want any more bars!" [laughter] He was set on doing it, so we came back and he had this weird sense of humor and just said different funny things that would kind of shock people. When he got his cattle and he wanted a brand for them, why his brand was C-O-W. So then he thought that was really funny when he branded the bull, it said "COW." He was wanting to get some horses. He said, "If I ever get a horse that's mine, I'm going to brand it with a COW brand, and people will look at it and say, "What's going on?!"

So this was back in his ranching days? He didn't have any more ranch...

Well, no. But after we came back *here*, then we started collecting some animals. We bought some different people's cattle and stuff like that. And we pastured them out most of the time.

When you say "most of the time," did you live out?

We had leased a parcel of land, a hundred and sixty acres of land down here. And some fellow didn't have anybody to work it, and he was not able. Actually, he was the veterinary in Reno, but he had bought it as an investment, and he wanted somebody to work the land so that he wouldn't lose

whatever it was that...It was one of those desert land entry things. And my husband had been in ranching all his life, and he'd watched these farmers come in from Texas and he kept saying, "Well if they can do it, I think *I* can." So this was his chance to do it, so he just leased it to him—just a lease but no payment. He said, "You go in there and you do whatever you have to do, and work it for me, and you don't have to pay me anything." So that's what we did.

Were the cattle there?

No, we bought the cattle. So then we worked the land and got alfalfa crops in and that sort of thing.

Oh my! Besides the bar?

Uh-huh.

Estelle, I want to go back to the bar, so let's get back there, and tell me what happened with the bar.

Well, we decided to close it. We were tired of it and we couldn't seem to sell it, and we decided to close the bar. So we just kept the building, closed it down, and we moved to Reno.

And how long did you live in Reno?

We lived there about six years.

And was the bar closed that whole time?

Yes.

And then did you come back to Austin?

Yes.

What brought you back to Austin?

Well, our daughter had graduated from University and we just felt like we wanted to come back to Austin, so we did. We still had the building there, the bar and the apartment, so we just came back and refurbished the apartment. We never did open the bar again, we just had it for sale. Just opened up the apartment and we lived there in the apartment.

Did you finally sell the bar?

We did finally, yeah, but not until about 1978, I believe it was.

Now you said your daughter went to the University. She graduated high school here?

Yes.

And did she go through four years at college?

Yes.

Is that why you moved to Reno?

Well, that was one of the reasons. But then my husband was born in Reno and had gone through his grammar school and high school years there, and so it was sort of home to him, and he had been wandering around for quite a number of years, and he sort of thought he'd like to go back to Reno.

Now what did he do when he came back to Austin? What did both of you do when you came back here? Did you have a way of earning a living here?

Well, he was more or less retired. He was sixteen years older than I was.

Sixteen years older! You like older men?

He was so enthusiastic, sometimes I thought *I* was the older one! [laughter] But he was pretty well retired. But he worked as a freight agent. The freight office was open here then, and they had a freight line through here and he was the freight agent.

Now was that freight with trucking?

Uh-huh.

Then what did you begin to do now that you were without the bar and your daughter...

Well, I went to work in the courthouse for the County Clerk. She was the first girl that I knew here in Austin, the *only* one, when I came here. Remember I told you that she was from Battle Mountain and I had met her in Carlin. And then her son married my daughter. [laughs]

Really?! Oh!

So anyway, she was the County Clerk and she needed a clerk, and so I went to work for her. That was part-time. Then the County Treasurer needed somebody to work for *him* so of course I'd known him for years. He had originally been in banking, he'd been the bank manager. And so I worked part-time for him. And then he needed a full-time clerk, so I became the Deputy Treasurer. And then I ran for the office of Recorder/Auditor, and I worked for him about five years, I guess.

Did you win the Recorder/Auditor?

Yes, I did.

You took after your mother!

[laughing] Yeah! And then my brother was the JP (Justice of the Peace). [laughs]

Oh, my goodness! Now was your mother still alive while you were doing that?

Oh yes.

Was she kind of retired by then?

Well she retired and she resigned her position as County Treasurer in 1956, when we were living in Battle Mountain. And then she decided to get married again. The fellow lived here in Austin, we'd known him for a long while, a real nice person. So she got married again, and so then they continued to live here in Austin.

First of all, how old was she when she married?

Well, let's see, she was about sixty-three.

Was that a good marriage?

Uh-huh, it was very good. He only lived four years. He was quite a bit older than she was, and he had heart problems. But they traveled a lot. He had to take her all over the country to introduce her to his family. He had a sister in Texas that had the same birthdate that *he* had October 15, and so they took a couple of trips to Texas to visit with his sister and relatives down there. He had six children, I think: four boys and two girls. And so one of the girls lived in Stockton—she was a nurse—and so she and my mother hit it off real good—their birthdays were about the same time, and they hit it off real good. So they spent quite a bit of time in Stockton, California. And strangely, her great-uncle, Billy Nichols that

had the hay ranch in Eureka when she was a little girl, had moved to California, his wife, and she never heard anything more about them. But when they were down in Stockton, my step-father's daughter had some friends and she took them to visit, and here they were my mother's cousins, Billy Nichol's daughters! And so they used to spend quite a bit of time out there visiting with them. They had a little farm and some orchards and everything.

So your mother obviously retired from her active career work.

Uh-huh. And then they took a trip back to Tennessee. He hadn't been back for years and years. That was where he was born and raised, and he still had relatives back there. So they went back to visit with them, and then when they came back in October, and then that December, two days after Christmas, he died. So they were mated for four years, was all.

But four good years.

Yeah, they had a nice...And he helped remodel her house and make it bigger. So they had a good four years.

Now let's get back to the kind of work that you did at the courthouse, because what is the work of a County Treasurer?

No, I was the Deputy Treasurer.

Okay, what are the responsibilities of a Deputy Treasurer? Tell me what you might do in a day or a week.

Well it depends on the time of year. We have to collect the county taxes, the real property taxes. Then we have to make out the receipts—or we did at that time. There was no

computers or anything, so it was all done by hand.

What year was this?

It was probably 1970 to 1974.

How did you collect the taxes?

We sent out tax bills. Tax bills were sent out, and then people either came in and paid their taxes—they brought their bills in and paid them, or they sent their taxes in. They were paid quarterly. They could pay them all at the same time, or they could pay them quarterly. Then we had to make out the tax receipts. Then we had to balance all of those and make sure that they all agreed and the money that we had. And then we deposited those receipts. Then we had to take care of balancing the statements when the canceled checks came back. The Recorder/Auditors Office made out the checks and paid the bills and things. But when the canceled checks came in with the statements, we had to go through and make sure that it all agreed with *our* records and that the statement balanced everything with our checkbooks and that it all balanced. Oh, let's see, we had to keep track of *all* of the taxes when they came in. They all had to be receipted in the book, and receipts made out each time that we got a payment. Then at the end of the year we had to make sure that all of *that* balanced. Mostly, it was just handling the money, and for investments we had to take care of investing the money.

Who decided how to invest it? Did you have a part in the decision?

No, it wasn't mine, because I was only the Deputy. But the County Commissioners more or less had the ultimate say. But the

treasurer was the one that actually did the investing.

So the taxes were seasonal. Was it pretty hectic during those periods?

Oh yes, when we had to get it out. The Auditor's Office made up what they called the tax rolls, and he had enormous big books. He made out the tax rolls, and that said who owned the property, what property was owned, and how much they owed. Then he brought the big books into us, and then we had to go through the books and we had to then type out the bills and send them out. And so getting the tax bills *out* was a hassle, and sometimes, you see, the State Legislature decides what your tax rate is going to be for each county. And sometimes we didn't get our tax rate until the last minute. Sometimes we got the tax rate, we had it all figured out, and then they made a change, so we had to turn around and we'd have to change it and go through this whole rigmarole and change it all *again*, so we'd be late getting it out. So we'd be really working day and night to get those things out, because we had a deadline.

Several questions: You say "we"—how many of you were doing this?

Well there was just the Treasurer and myself. Then if it got too hectic, we'd get somebody else in to help.

Did the Treasurer do some of the typing too?

Well, he did mostly the figuring and the mathematical part of it. If we really got stuck, why yes, he did too.

About how many did you have to send out?

[laughing] Oh, gee!

I mean, the population is 350, but you have several people in a household.

Well this was the whole county, the whole Lander County.

Oh the whole county! [gasps] With just manual labor!

Uh-huh.

Did you work overtime to get that done?

Well, when we had to get the tax bills out, sometimes we did. But not too much of the time.

And how long did you do that? How long were you the Deputy Treasurer?

About four years.

Oh, that's a long time. Did you enjoy it?

Yes, I did, very much. My life's work was working in the banks. And the fellow that I was working for had worked in some of the same banks and worked with and for some of the same people that I had worked with. And so we got along very well.

Who was it? What was his name?

Don Bruce. We worked together very well, and we both enjoyed the challenge of seeing that things balanced, and if they didn't, finding out where the mistake was, and getting it corrected. So it was really enjoyable. I enjoyed it very much.

So that was four years. Did you run again?

Well now I didn't run for that office, I was just hired for that office.

Oh, I see, you were hired.

I was hired, *he* was the one that was elected. And so he was actually the County Treasurer. I was just his Deputy. So I was only hired to do that. But then I ran for Recorder/Auditor's Office, and I was elected in November 1974. It was exactly thirty years after my mother had run for County Treasurer. [chuckles]

Oh my! Now what did that position entail? What were your responsibilities in that job?

Well, it's actually two offices in one. There's the Recorder who is responsible for recording all of the legal documents. Anyone wanting to record deeds or mining claims, or any type of legal document that needed to be recorded, came through our office and we stamped it with the Recorder's stamp and the date and the time that it was recorded. And then it was recorded in a large book and it was cross-indexed so that you could look up the grantor's name and find it, or you could look up the grantee's name and find it in the deeds. Then those were all put on microfilm. Like I say, we didn't have any computers in those days, so all of this had to be done manually. We did put them on microfilm. Then we had charge of all of the old records that went back to 1863—they were all in our office. And then the Auditor's part of it, we did the payroll, we figured the budgets, did the reports—all the different types of reports that needed to be done for the county—took care of paying all of the bills for all of the county.

A very big responsibility! Did you enjoy all of that detail?

Yes, I did!

And how long did you have that position?

For eight years.

Until what year?

Until the end of 1982. I ran again for the office, but they had voted to move the county seat to Battle Mountain, so I really didn't want to move to Battle Mountain, and I really didn't want to win, because my husband wasn't well, but the girls in my office kept saying, "Oh, come on, come on, run." So I thought, "Well, I'm gonna try it, and I'll just leave it up to the Lord if that's what I'm supposed to do, I'll do it. I'll arrange it some way. If not, I'll just be happy either way."

And what happened?

I lost, because we had fought—this end of the county—had fought to keep the county seat here to start with.

Is it a vote of the whole county?

Uh-huh.

And they had a lot of mines working in Battle Mountain, and they had a lot of people there, and they voted to move it. And of course they won it. But it was quite a traumatic experience, because they had tried over the hundred years of its existence, at that time, to move it several different times. I think in 1937 they tried to move it, and then in 1954 when my mother was County Treasurer, they tried to move it—but without success. And so then to think when I was the Recorder/Auditor in office, why then they...[laughs] So it was rather traumatic. So we fought them and we asked them if we. ...

Because Don [Bruce, County Treasurer] and I were pretty close to the end of our term, and we asked them if we could keep our office here and have one down there, you know, so that we could run it from this end. But then they said no. We went to court over it and then the judge finally said, "Yeah, you gotta move." So anyway, then we loaded up everything and we moved it down.

Did you have to commute until your term ended?

Yes.

You couldn't stay down there for that period?

Well, I guess we could have maybe stayed, but then we had people living here that were working for us too. I had two girls my Deputy Recorder and my Deputy Auditor, that also commuted. And then Don Bruce, the Treasurer, he commuted. He had girls. We had brought girls up here to train them, and then they went...

Did you carpool and all go down together?

Yes.

So that made it at least a little enjoyable, going together.

Oh yeah.

I can see where that would be traumatic. But you could understand both sides.

Oh, absolutely! I can understand.

It's very hard, both sides. I can appreciate that. During those many years where you were working in the courthouse, a very responsible

job, what were some of the other activities in your life?

Well, we had two young sons that were going to high school. One of the boys graduated from high school, the other one decided he wanted to go in the Navy. So he went in the Navy before he finished high school. He finally got his GED and his diploma while he was in the Navy. My husband was doing some ranching and he had the cattle. And so I spent a lot of my time outside with him when I wasn't in the office. Sometimes he got a little impatient and he'd tell people I was "married to the office." He'd rather have me outside running around with him. And I just thoroughly enjoyed the cattle and all the activities with them. Then my youngest son got married and he married a little teacher, and they had a little boy. And so they used to go out with us—worked the cattle and that sort of thing. So that was always nice to have them.

Now you mentioned your daughter went to the University of Nevada-Reno. Did she come back to Austin?

She came back when she graduated and she had majored in home economics. They had promised her here that they would have a Home Ec Department for her so that she could come back and teach home ec. Well it turned out that they did have a Home Ec Department, but it was rather antique. So anyway, she did, but she had to teach some other classes and courses that she didn't really feel qualified to teach, like chemistry and a few things [chuckles] like that. She got married in June of the following year. Then when she went back to school, she taught another half-year, then she was pregnant and she had shingles, so the doctor told her that

she shouldn't go back because the situation at school was...the principal was...sort of difficult to get along with, and it was a real nervous situation, tense situation.

Where was she living when she had her baby and was married?

She was living here in Austin.

Does she still live here in Austin?

No, she lives in Fallon now.

Oh, Fallon, that's not too far.

See, her husband worked for the State Highway Department—still does—but he was here and then he transferred to other communities around, and then they finally ended up in Fallon, and she teaches in Fallon.

Now I understand that you became very active in your Church. Can you tell me a little bit about that and what you're doing?

Well, it was strange: When I lived here, years ago, with my cousin, her son, Jimmy, said—one day there wasn't much of anything to do—and he said to me, "The priest is coming to the Episcopal Church. Why don't we go?" And so we went. I was about sixteen, I guess. So we went to church that one Sunday. And so then the priest only came once a month, from Fallon, I believe. And so then whenever the priest came, I went to church at the Episcopal Church. And then when I stayed with the Givenses, they were Roman Catholics, and the grandmother would come to go to church, so she'd stop by *our* house, and so I had to go to Catholic church, which was *fine*. I enjoyed it and it was great. So that six months I went to Catholic

church, the Roman Catholic church. But from that time on, wherever I was, I usually always went to the Episcopal Church, and if not then I went to the Methodist or whatever happened to be handy. But then I came back to Austin, and then when I went to Battle Mountain...Well, first of all, I was in Austin—I guess I was about twenty—one. My little girl was about eighteen months old, and we were both baptized in St. George's Episcopal Church here, on the same evening. Then when I went to Battle Mountain, they had a very active ladies group there. And it was a lovely little church, and we had lay readers that had a service every Sunday, and they had a little church worker who was a little Taiwanese lady, a very sweet little lady. So I was really very active there, and enjoyed it very much. And then when I came back to Austin from Battle Mountain, we had a church worker here, a missionary worker, and she was going to be leaving. And she said to the priest, "Well, what am I going to do for somebody to have services?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, unless you can get some of these ladies to read the service." And she said, "Well, I doubt that I can." And I said, "Well, you tell me what to read, and I'll do it." So she took me through the service, so I started having service when she was gone. That was just like morning prayer—we didn't have communion or anything like that, because only the priest could do that. Then I went to Reno, and I was active at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church there. But that was back in the days when mostly it was the men were the priests and the lay readers and that sort of thing. And the fellow that was the priest there was more for having it status quo. So then when I came back to Austin from Reno that time, like in 1969, we had a fellow, a priest—he was a deacon at that time, but he lived in Pioche. But he came here and he

was very much into having the people in the Church be very active and be lay readers and even trained as deacons if they would do it. And so he had quite a lay readers' class, and very active. Madge was one of them, and Essie [Strickland] was another. And then some other people that later moved away, a man and his wife. And so I came back, and since I had already been doing quite a bit of it myself, before, and then I was on the vestry at St. Stephen's and active there, why I just sort of fell into it. So then he left, this priest, Herman Buck, went to Nebraska, so that kind of left us again without any regular priest. So we had different priests coming from different churches in Reno and Virginia City and Fallon. And so then our Bishop, Wes Frensdorf...They had come up with this thing, what they called TEAM Academy, which was Teach Each A Ministry, so that you could have a priest in your local parish for that particular parish, ordained right there: study and take your test and everything, and then be ordained in your own church, *for* your church. And so he came here and there were quite a few women that were doing it at the time, being ordained, but Madge and I were happy the way it was. So then he came and he said, "Now *look*, you *have* to do this!" So we did. He said, "You have to call someone." So they called Madge and I, so we studied like crazy, and for sixty-five-year-olds, that's [laughter] kind of hard on the head to go back to the Old Testament and start studying all that history and all those dates and all that sort of thing. You know, the old prophets and patriarchs and all that kind of stuff. But we did it, and we passed our test and we were ordained together.

How many hours did you have to put in during this period, and how long a period until you were qualified to be ordained?

Well, it's hard to say just how long. It took us quite a long while, because we started and then we had some rather tragic things happen in the family, and my husband had died just shortly before the Bishop asked us to do this. And he had died in September of 1982. And that was when we were still commuting back and forth to Battle Mountain with the offices being moved. So then we got a pretty good start. It was kind of difficult for me, but Madge would come over and we'd sit and study together.

Maybe it helped.

Yeah, it did, it helped us both. We'd study together. And then my son shot himself, so that was kind of another setback, and just a few different things like that, that kept going on. So it took us, when we really finally got into it and really started going, it took us about three years, to study.

Maybe that helped you through a difficult time. Was your husband sick very long?

Well, he really didn't realize that he was as ill as he was. He was a big strong man, and he started having problems. He had hernias, and he had a strangulated hernia

Oh, I'm so sorry.

Then he had two others that he was going to have to have done, and so he didn't look forward to that. But his blood was really thick and the doctor in Eureka had told him, "You need to see your doctor about this." But he wouldn't.

I'm sorry. I'm not even going to ask you about your son. So you were ordained, and what

are some of the types of things you do as an ordained minister in your church?

Well, here, because we have so few members and we don't have too many children—most of our members are older people and the ones that are younger and that *do* have children, they sort of send their children to the Baptist Sunday School.

Do they have a full-time minister at the Baptist church?

Yes.

They have someone full-time, who's always there?

Who lives here, yes. And his wife. They're a younger couple. And then they have young children. One girl is a teenager, and then they have a son-in-law and a son that are also ministers. So it's sort of a family affair. And like I say, they have young people, so they have young people in and out more. But what we do, we have the service, and we have holy communion, and since we are ordained, we can marry people. Madge hasn't got her license because Frank is also the justice of the peace, and he marries people, so she didn't think that she needed to do that, but I do have a license, and I was able to co-officiate at my granddaughter's wedding in Reno at St. Stephen's.

Oh, how nice!

So then we do baptisms and we've done a *number* of funerals. But we can do all of the sacraments except for the confirmation. The Bishop has to do the confirmations. But the rest of it, we can.

So you're making a great contribution to your community.

Oh, I think so.

A great contribution. About how many belong?

Well, we have quite a number on our roll, but they're not very active. But we do have, I would say, probably eight that are very active.

And what about on the holidays like on Christmas and Easter? Do you get a good crowd then?

Yeah.

Now how many active churches are there in Austin now?

Well, we have the Baptist, and the Mormon, and the Roman Catholic is coming back some, and then the Episcopal church. The Roman Catholic has been having quite a controversy over their church, because the community has not supported it, the Roman Catholic community, even though there are quite a few here, they have not supported it, and the church building itself has pretty much run down. They wanted to restore it, and then they got some money, and then they got into a fight over who was going to do what. [chuckles] So then the Bishop, they wanted *him* to come up with some funds to restore it, and he said that he couldn't justify taking money from other parishes to fix this one up when nobody would—you know, the people in the town wouldn't support it. And it is, I think, probably the oldest Roman Catholic church in the state.

About how many families or people in Austin are Catholic?

Well, there's not as many now as there used to be. But I guess, let's see, there's probably... Oh, I would say maybe six.

Well, with six, how can you do that?

Well, this is the thing. But at one time there were quite a few Roman Catholics here.

But even if you had a hundred, how could you support...

Well, the thing is, you see, we only have, I'd say, eight active members. But our church, we have managed to keep it up, and in 1981, I guess, we did \$36,000 worth of restoration work on it. And last year we did another \$2,500 worth of work on the roof. There's only actually about five of us that really contribute to it. But now when we really get serious and we *need* money for something, we send out letters or talk to people and they're very good about donating. Of course we got a little historical money, and then we got some funds from the diocese when we had to do our restoration. But if you really are serious about it, you can do it. But the Roman Catholics, a lot of them, they didn't go to church. They wanted the church there, they wanted it kept up, but they don't want to contribute anything to it, their time or their talent or their treasure. So it's just a case of no matter how small it is, if you really mean business, you can do it. And the community will go along with it, because it's a historic building and they want to keep it there. You know, everybody hates to see it running down, you know.

Do they have a priest here?

No, they have one in Battle Mountain that comes.

They have a visiting priest?

Uh-huh.

About how many attend their services?

Well, like on Easter and Christmas, they have more. But, well, sometimes there'll be like...I went one Sunday with my cousin, and I think there was three or four of us, plus the priest.

That's all? Oh.

Then sometimes there'll be, oh, probably six or eight, but not very many.

What about the Mormon church? About how many Mormons are there that attend their church?

Well, I don't really know how many there are, but I know on Sunday morning there's an awful lot of cars up there.

Oh, they come from all around?

Yeah, and the Young families out in Smoky Valley out there, Chester and Nelda Young, and of course their family. Of course they have a large family with a *lot* of children, and their children have a lot of children. And then there's some families down in Reese Antelope Valley, between here and Battle Mountain that I think come up to church here.

Do they have a steady priest?

I think that it's a family affair. I think that the Youngs, if I'm not mistaken, have some of their—the young people are what they call Elders, and they do the service themselves.*

And what about the Methodists?

Now the Methodist church was allowed to fall to pieces. The California-Nevada Annual Conference of the Methodist Church came in and they were going to tear it down and take the bricks. It has real nice bricks, and they were going to take the bricks to build another church or do something with them someplace else. And then the Methodists, who hadn't been to church for years and years, rose up and said, "No, you're not taking our church!" So they got with some of the other people in town and they formed the Lander County Civic and Historic Society. The California-Nevada Annual Conference of the Methodist Church deeded the church and manse to Belle Roberts, who had sung in the church choir, played the organ, and had been Superintendent of the Sunday School. So, the Lander County Civic and Historic Society took them. The same day, May 4, 1951, Belle Roberts recorded a deed transferring the Church to Lander County Civic and Historic Society. And then they sold the manse, or the parish house, to someone for a home. Unable to keep up the buildings, the foundation offered them to the Nevada State Museum, but the attorney general ruled that the Museum had no authority to take them. So Lander County took them and had this big church building that was all falling down.

Is it just closed down now?

No, what they did then, as I recall, with the help of the State Historical Society, the county received funds from state bond money for parks and historical preservation. Then the Fleischmann Foundation came along and

*All worthy male church members twelve years of age and older are eligible to hold the priesthood. The Church is led by a lay ministry.

gave the county funds to finish the restoration inside and out.

And what is it now?

And now it's the Town Hall.

Oh! It's the Town Hall!

So they use it for meetings, funerals, weddings, whatever. Graduations.

Oh, I have to get in to see it. Now, you've been here a long time, you've seen it from an early period, and I'm sure there've been—I think—a lot of changes over the years. From your observation, tell me a little bit about how you think this very unique town or city of Austin has changed, during the period when you first saw it, and now.

Well, when I first came here, it was just kind of a sleepy little town. It was 1937. They'd had a little mining boom, but then it had gone down, there was nothing going on. It was just very quiet and we had quite a few Native American Indians that lived right here in town. We had quite a few Basque people that lived here. But even then, there were quite a few establishments that were running. And Main Street, the big old grocery store they called the Commercial Store, was just a *really* neat place. It was old-fashioned, and the high ceilings. It was really neat. And so the building is still there, but they've totally remodeled it to where you don't recognize it whatsoever. And the old Silver Dollar Bar and Hotel—Elisa Gandolfo's father owned that. His name was Frank Aldapi. It was the one with the staircase out front on the balcony that you could raise up. Just a quiet, sleepy little town. And now, of course, we have quite a few more people that have moved in. And a lot of the houses

and things that were then here are gone. We have a lot of the hills where there didn't used to be anything, when I came—at one time, there was, of course, houses all over them. But when I came, there wasn't any. Now they've leveled off the hills and put in mobile homes and built houses.

You see it growing?

Well, yes, and changing very much.

Who were some of the people who have come into office into these new homes and into these new mobile homes?

Well, one of the changes that I've seen is when I first came here, the Forest Service had just the one, the little house on Main Street, and the big storage garage there. And that was about all there was with the Forest Service. I think they had their office right there. Now they have a facility down below town on the foothill there, out of the canyon, and they have homes for the people that work. And they have an *awful lot more* people working there. Then they have a new office building and a facility for their office, and they have a place for their horses and all that sort of thing. So that has grown, and people have come in for that.

Do you think that that will create perhaps a few new small businesses to take over some of the closed-up stores on the main street?, that it might bring in a few more...

I doubt that I think about the only thing outside of mining, some people say tourism, but Austin is a long ways from anyplace. And unless you have something real special to draw them, why, people just are not going to come. So I don't see it, unless it's mining.

I understand that the medical facilities are a problem too, as people are getting older here.

Right. A lot of the retirees came, and they moved especially to the Kingston area out there. And they were there a few years, bought their homes and were there a few years and enjoying it very much, but then their health got to the point where they had to move away again, where they were closer to the doctors or lower altitude.

Oh, the altitude too, is uncomfortable when you're older. But it is unique, and I sense the deep loyalty and love of the people who've lived here a long time, now that I've gotten to know the people, because it's the people that make the town very special. We're ending the third tape, and so I'm going to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for allowing us to interview you.

ADDENDUM

Estelle Shanks sent the following information to add to her interview:

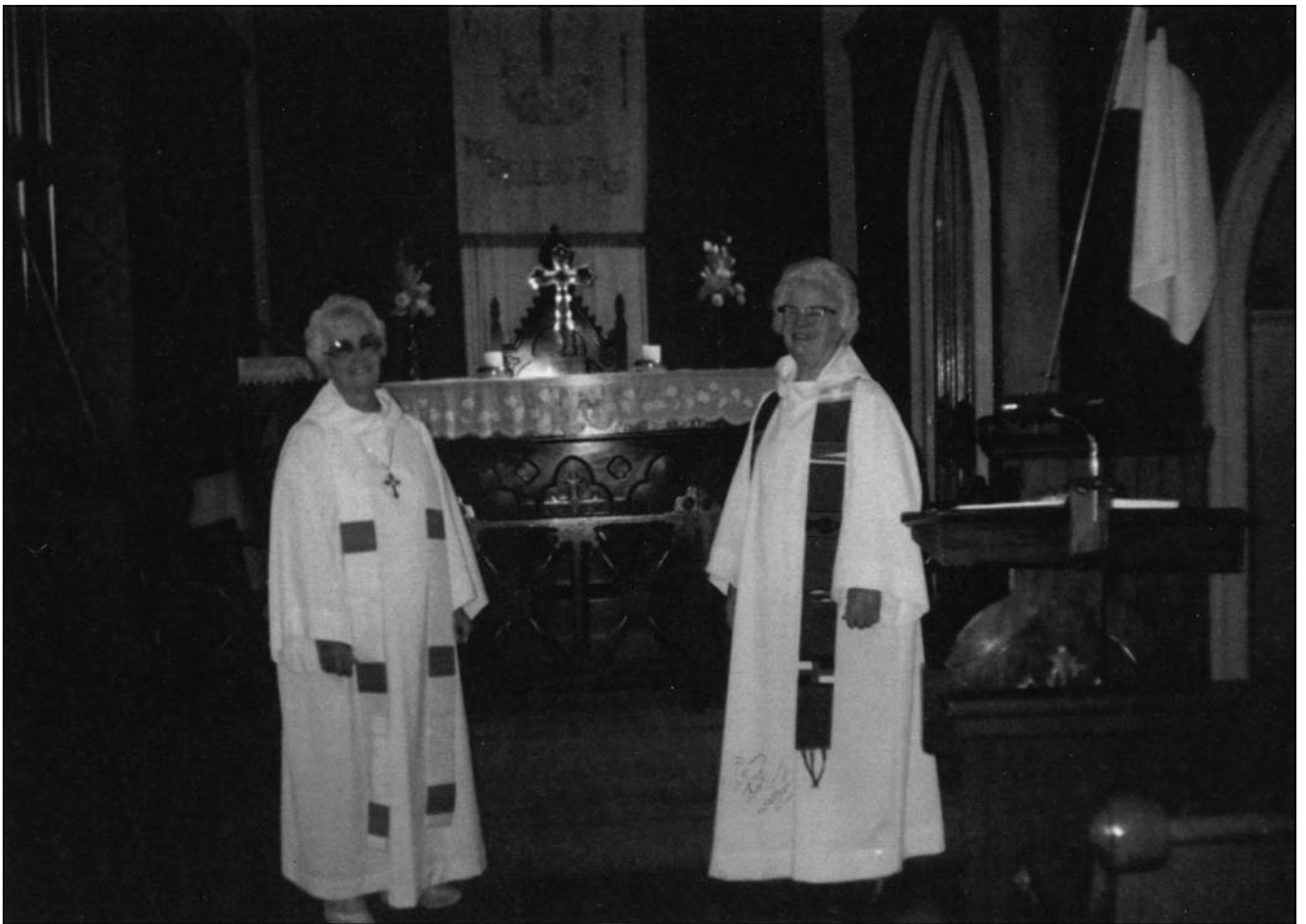
I married John Shanks in February, 1986. John lived in Reno for years and spent many weekends in Austin, as well as the rest of Northern Nevada's ghost towns, digging for antique bottles.

I first met him in the 1970s when my husband Laurence brought him to our house to show him some old bottles and gave him permission to dig on some of our properties. In the intervening years our spouses passed away. John was again in Austin digging bottles. We struck up an acquaintanceship and later married. We lived in Reno for a short time until he retired. Then ended up back in Austin.

John bought the vacant bank building across from the old Courthouse and opened a rock, bottle and jewelry shop. He had done some rockhounding over the years and was quite knowledgeable about rocks, minerals and gems.

I had taken a silversmithing course from Carol Givens in the seventies and still had the tools. I showed John what I remembered and he began making rings, pendants and earrings for sale. He also sells some of my pastel paintings. John has the shop open about five summer months. That gives us time to go to the coast in the spring or fall and also do a little Nevada fishing.

ESTELLE SHANKS
PHOTOGRAPHS



ESTELLE CHANKS AND MADGE BERTRAND, MAY 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Charles and Estella Allen, Eureka, Nevada.

(Original photograph owned by Estelle Shanks)



Frank Bertrand and father Matthew, Cortez, Nevada, ca. 1936.

(Original photograph owned by Frank Bertrand)



Charlotte Allen (Mrs. Burt Bertrand), Daughter of Estella Case Allen, Mother of Estelle Bertrand Shanks, 1948, 55 years of age.

(Original photograph owned by Estelle Shanks)



Estelle Bertrand, 1945



Estelle, Spencer, Barbara,
Laurence and Paul Saralegui



Estelle Bertrand (Saralegui) Shanks, 1978,
Lander County Recorder/Auditor.

*(All photographs on this page
owned by Estelle Shanks)*



Charlotte Bertrand (right), Barbara Saralegui (Estelle's daughter), and Georgia Medlock (friend) at Mom's Grill, owned and operated by Estelle Saralegui (Shanks) and mother Charlotte Bertrand, Austin, Nevada, Summer 1953.

(Original photograph owned by Estelle Shanks)

ESTELLE SHANKS ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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JOE STRESHLEY

PREFACE

Joe Streshley was born in 1918 on the Steiner Ranch, Austin, Nevada where his grandparents and mother settled when they immigrated from Portugal. He spent most of his life working on the family cattle ranch. He describes cattle drives, selling the cattle to buyers who came to the ranches and corrals, and shipping cattle by rail.

Before the establishment of Indian colonies and reservations, Indian families lived on most ranches, with their tents. The Indian boys and men were hired when workers were needed on the ranches and the women helped with the laundry.

During droughts when they couldn't raise their own hay, they had to buy hay, mostly from Fallon which was blessed with irrigation from the Newlands Irrigation Project.

Joe's "training ground" for his later career as brand inspector for the State of Nevada started as a young boy working with his Dad. He describes the branding procedure and

registration of brands as well as vaccination of cattle against diseases.

After selling the family ranch in 1960, Joe worked on ranches in Smoky Valley, Kingston and Gilman. He settled in Austin in 1978, and lives in the same comfortable house he shared with his mother until she died. Joe is still in demand as brand inspector for the State of Nevada, covering parts of Lander and Nye Counties.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Joe Streshley at his home, in Austin, Nevada on June 20, 1993.

Mr. Streshley, I'm so pleased to be here to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Could you tell us your full name?

Joe Streshley: William Joseph Streshley.

And where were you born?

Well, I was born in Austin.

In Austin, Nevada?! Right here! Native!

Yeah.

What was the date?

April 16, 1918.

I want to ask you about your father's parents, your paternal grandparents. Can you tell us anything about your grandfather on your father's side?

Well, he was a teamster. Came from Virginia, but I don't know when—after the Civil War, I guess.

Came where?

To Nevada.

Do you know where in Nevada?

Where he first came, I don't know, no.

Where did he wind up?

In Austin. Well, they homesteaded a little place out of Austin.

Oh?! And did he come with your grandmom? Was he married?

No, he wasn't married when he came here.

Okay. Now where did he homestead outside of Austin?

On the Grass Valley Road, but it's in Simpson Park Canyon.

And that's part of Lander County?

Yes.

Did you know him?

I can barely remember him.

Tell me about your grandma, his wife.

Well, she was born in Genoa [Nevada], but I don't know when she came to Lander County.

Did they ever tell you how they met?

No.

They married and lived on that ranch?

They homesteaded that place after they got married.

Oh, okay. So before they married was your grandpop ranching in that area?

No, I think he was a teamster.

Oh, a teamster! Then tell me about your mother's family: your grandparents on your mother's side.

Grandfather was a miner. And I guess he came here and got a job, and then he sent for his wife.

Came here to the Austin area?

Yeah, the Austin area.

Where did he come from, Portugal?

Portugal.

And sent back for a wife?

They were married before he came here 'cause Mother was a year-and-a-half old when my grandmother came to Austin.

Oh! In other words, that family also came to Austin?

Yes.

So you have roots here way back.

Yes.

You're probably one of the oldest long-term pioneers.

[laughs] Left!

I mean, from three generations: your grandparents, your parents, and you.

Yes.

So now tell me a little bit about your father: What's your father's name?

William. Just William Streshley.

Was he born here in Austin?

Yeah. Well, I don't know, for sure, where he was born. He was born in this area, I guess.

Did your father tell you anything about his life? Did he grow up on that ranch?

I guess he grew up there, but then he worked at a lot of the ranches around.

What was the name of that family ranch where your grandpop and grandmom homesteaded? Was there a name?

It wasn't really a ranch.

I see, they homesteaded.

Yes, they just had a few acres where they had a milk cow and chickens and garden, and someplace to keep his horses.

And what was that area called, where they homesteaded?

Simpson Park. Well, the Pony Express trail came by there.

Now tell me a little about your mother.

She was supposed to have been a year-and-a-half old.

When she came from Portugal?

Yes.

And where did her parents first settle, do you know? before they came? Did they come right to Nevada?

I don't know.

Did your father tell you much about his life as he was growing up? Did he talk to you much about it?

[chuckles] I don't remember!

Where were you born? Right here in Austin?

I'm not sure. I might have been born on the ranch, I don't know.

When you were born, what ranch were your parents living on?

On the old Steiner Ranch. They call it Streshley Ranch, because we bought it in years afterward.

I see, in other words they' were leasing the ranch?

They leased it for quite a few years.

I see. Now, when you were born at the ranch, how long did you live at that ranch as a child? Did you live there all your growing-up years?

Yes.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

One brother and one sister.

Where are you in the line-up of these children?

I'm the oldest.

Okay, you were born first. From your very earliest recollections, tell me, as a child, what you can remember about first the kind of a house or living arrangements where your family lived on that ranch? Can you remember, as you were growing up?

Oh yeah!

Describe it to us.

Well, a two-story house. At first, I think, they didn't have any water in the house—they

had to pack water. And then they piped the water so they had one of those pitcher pumps.

What is that? Describe that.

A pump with a handle that pumps water. That's the running water they had in the house.

Where did the water come from?

From a spring.

Oh, you were near a spring there?

Yes.

Was there an indoor bathroom?

No indoor bathroom.

No indoor plumbing?

No, no indoor plumbing.

Descri What was the size of the house? Did you have a room?

Oh, it was a big house. Two, four, six rooms, I guess.

Was that house on the ranch when they leased it?

Yes.

As you were growing up, what kind of a ranch was it? What kind of crops or animals?

Cow ranch, cattle ranch. They used to sell some hay, years ago, baled hay and sold it. But mainly cattle ranching.

Mainly cattle. Do you know how many head of cattle they finally had on that ranch?

Oh, around three hundred.

Was there grazing land near their place?

Yes.

Open grazing?

Well, years ago, it was *all* open grazing. They didn't have to pay for it. But after the Forest Service went in, then they had to start paying. And I'm not right sure what year the Forest Service came.

Now tell me, as a young boy, how old were you when you had to start helping on that ranch? and what kind of chores or work did you do?

[laughs] Oh, I don't know what year, but big enough you could ride!

Ride a horse?

You ride a horse.

Kind of describe what you did on the ranch. Were you a young teenager, or twelve or something, when you started?

Oh, I imagine before that.

When you first started, describe what your day would be like, when it wasn't a school day.

[chuckles] I don't know. Probably help milk the cows, probably, and feed the chickens.

What time would you have to get up?

Well, they got up at daylight. And I don't know what else we'd do. Any riding to be done, I guess we'd help.

What do you mean by "riding to be done"?

Go gather cattle or horses or things like that.

Did you have a lot of horses too?

Quite a few.

Did you work with your father, or did you have workmen too?

We had workmen at times, yeah.

Did you work in the hay fields too? Did you help?

Oh yes! Well, I imagine I didn't work in the hay fields until I was a teenager.

Where did you go to school when it came time to go to school?

My first three years I went to school in Austin—stayed with the grandparents.

Oh, I see, you came here and lived with them?

Yeah, during the school year.

Where in Austin did they live?

What I remember, my grandparents lived up where the Mormon church is now. There was a house there, though. They tore the house down.

How many people lived in that house when you came to join them? Were there others in the household besides your grandparents?

One aunt, I know of. I don't know whether the other aunt was married then or not.

Were you about six when you came to live with them to go to school?

I imagine, yeah.

How did you feel when you left the ranch to come and live with them to go to school?

I don't think I liked it! [laughs]

Away from your family and the worked that you liked!

Yeah.

Did you like working on the ranch?

Oh yes.

Where was the school when you first started when you were six?

Well, I don't know how to describe it. It isn't here anymore.

Okay. Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

No, I don't think so. I think it was more than one room.

Now, you went from six until how old did you stay here to go to that school?

I guess about nine.

About three years?

Yes, and then they started a school in the country.

Oh, okay. But let's stick with this school a little bit. Can you remember about how many kids were in your classroom?

No.

None of that. Too long ago?

Yeah.

Can you remember what Austin was like? Can you describe anything about it, compared to today?

[laughs] It hasn't changed a lot. I mean there's some things that's changed. Before the year 1934, all roads were gravel and dirt roads. Then they were paved. But as far as the size is concerned, it's fairly the same.

Did you have kids to play with?

Oh yes. Seemed to be more kids then, you know.

Younger families then?

Yeah.

What would you kids do for fun?

[laughs] Play marbles, I guess. That was one of the main things.

What else did you do?

Sleigh ride in the winter.

Where did you sleigh ride? Where did you go?

Down Main Street!

Right down Main Street?! No cars then?

Well, not very many! No!

Did you go home on the weekends?

Sometimes. Not so much in the winter, but like in the fall or spring, my folks would come in Friday night and bring me back Sunday afternoon.

And you'd go home for vacations in summer.

Oh yes!

Now then you said the school started there: Tell me where and what kind of school. How far from your ranch?

We never had a school right at the ranch. There were three ranches in that vicinity.

What were the other two?

One was Dory Ranch and then Givens were on another ranch.

Is that the Givens from Carol's Country Kitchen?

Yeah, their boy, Billy. And he could probably tell you, if you interviewed him.

Yeah, I'm going to.

And they had this school in between, and we drove a buggy—one horse and a buggy—and went to the school, and then came home in the afternoon.

And who would drive that buggy?

I would! At *our* ranch, I did.

Oh, you had your own buggy from your ranch.

Yes, each family.

Were your sister and brother by then going to school?

That's when they started.

And the three of you—you would take them?

Well, yeah. The first year, I imagine just my brother went, because there's a little over a year's difference between their ages, see.

How many kids were in that school in your class? Was it one room?

One room, one teacher. I don't know, about ten kids, or twelve.

Where did the teacher come from?

We had a different teacher every year! Dollyruth Ansolabehere was one, one year, 1928. Her name was Crowell then. And I don't know where all the other teachers came from.

As you were going to school, did you have any favorite things that you were studying that you were more interested in?

No, I don't think so. I don't remember any.

Did the school have any social activities, any fun things, or any music or games, baseball?

Oh, no, we'd make our own games, you know. They'd have a Christmas party, you know—Valentine's maybe.

Did they have any music, singing, or...

No. I don't think they had a musical instrument—I don't remember.

How did you get to school if there was heavy snow?

We didn't go.

Just have a day off?

Yeah.

Didn't mind that! Now, I want to go back a little bit into your home, and I want to know a little more about your mother and your father. Tell me a little about your mom, so that we can get a feel for the kind of woman she was, and what her days were like.

Well, she was a schoolteacher before she got married.

Where did she teach? Around here, apparently?

Around here, yeah.

Tell me a little bit about her as your mother.

[laughs] I don't know. I guess she was always busy, that's for sure. She'd make us get our work done.

Was there any fun in the house? Did you play games or do anything? Have time to have some evening activities?

Oh, I don't think too much. We had our own games, I think.

Did you celebrate holidays with the family? Did you have Christmas?

Yes, we'd go to the grandparents' for Christmas.

Come here?

Either Austin or...Grandmother Streshley was out on the ranch for a while. Then after Grandfather Streshley died, then she moved to Austin.

Do you know about when he died? How old were you when he died?

I was only about six or seven years old—1925, I think, he died.

Then she moved here?

She stayed with a daughter.

Oh, her daughter was living here?

Yes.

Did most of the family stay around the Austin area?

Most of them.

So you had a lot of relatives around you when you were growing up?

Yes.

That was nice. Did you spend time with your Streshley grandparents on their place?

I can't hardly remember. I imagine I did, yes.

When you were small?

Yes.

Did your family come into Austin from the ranch to visit? Or did they go to church here? What were some activities off of the ranch?

Oh, I imagine they came. They *had* to come here for shopping.

Did they shop here in Austin?

Oh yeah, *had* to. [laughs] So I guess they did.

Did you ever take shopping trips to some of the other bigger places if you needed clothes or shoes?

Not then. After people got more automobiles and that, then I imagine they did. But those were all buggy days. I think my father, the first car he got was about 1925.

Was that a Model A Ford?

No, it was a Chevrolet, I don't know what they called the model, but it was Chevrolet, two-seater. My grandparents never had a car.

Did you get to drive the car when you were pretty young?

No, I was a teenager or; more before I drove a car.

When you were growing up, through school, did you ever get to a different place besides Austin? Did you ever get to Reno or Fallon or Battle Mountain?

Well, growing up, no, I don't think so.

As a child?

No.

Did you ever go on a train from Austin to Battle Mountain?

No.

Was that running then?

Yes.

Can you describe what it looked like from the Austin end? and what it was like?

No. [laughs] Well, I remember the old train, alright, but I couldn't describe it. Narrow gauge, they called it.

How old were you when it ended?

Oh, I was twenty-two or -three years old. Ended in 1938, I believe.

Was there a lot of activity around the train when it came? Did you ever go down?

The only activity I was around was when they shipped cattle.

Was that some of your cattle you'd bring to the train?

Well, everybody in this area took their cattle to the railroad corrals down there, and shipped them.

So there were corrals near the train?

It wasn't in Austin here, it was on Reese River, though. The end of the train was here

in Austin, but they had the stockyards—what you'd call them, I guess—down on the river down there, on Reese River.

And how far was that from where the train was in Austin?

About eight miles maybe.

Did you help with the shipping of the cattle?

Our own.

Describe that for people who don't know. From your ranch, tell us what you had to do to get them ready for shipping.

We had to drive them from the ranch to the corrals. And then most of the time they were sold to a buyer and they'd weigh the animals and then load them on the stock cars.

Would the buyers come to the corral to buy them?

Yes. Well, the buyers would come to the ranch, and personally make a deal to buy the cattle. Then they'd come to the corrals and the rancher would go to the corrals, and then they'd weigh them and make their deals, or get paid, whatever.

How did the buyers know to come to your ranch? How did you contact them?

Most of the time, you *didn't* contact them: they'd be circling around in a season, like a salesman [laughs] you know, and buy.

And then come back every year?

Some of them did.

Did you participate in that as you were getting older? Did you work with your dad?

Well, I didn't work with him on the dealing, but after he passed away, then I did.

But did you work with him when he was alive, so you knew just what to do? Was that your training ground?

Yes.

What part of the ranching did you like the best?

Oh, the riding part, I guess.

On the horse?

Yes.

Did you help with branding?

Oh, yes.

Describe what you would do in the branding process.

Well they'd have to put a hot iron. Every brand had a numeral, and you'd have to have a fire and they have to be hot. And the ear mark—each one's got a different ear mark, cut a piece out of one ear or both ears or whatever. Most ranchers vaccinated for certain diseases.

Did you do that too?

Yes.

Did you learn that from your father?

Oh, yes.

Did you take to that easily?

Oh, yes, that was easy.

Would you do that when they rounded the cattle up? Or you'd have to go out?

When you rounded them up. Wed just do it once a year or something like that.

Do you have a copy of your brand, so we could add it to your interview?

Yes.

Good! And tell me the process of how a brand is assigned. How do you get that registered?

You have to apply to the State Brand Office.

It's a state office?

Yeah, it's the state. I believe it *was* recorded just in counties, years ago, and then they transferred it to the state, and it's still in the state.

So that someone in another state could have the same brand?

Somebody in *another* state could, but nobody in this state can.

I see. And what if they're right on the border?
[laughs]

[laughs] Well, that's between states, then, I imagine.

So tell me: Do you choose your brand, and then bring it to register?

Yeah, you choose your brand.

And what if someone already has that brand?

You won't get it! But you might have to change it some way or pick another numeral. The one that has it, it's his legal brand.

When you had your brand, was that the one your grandparents had? Did it follow through?

Right—*still* have it! We don't use it right now, or anything, but we still own it.

I'd like to see that. Now! going back to your school days on the ran Did you go through eighth grade?

I went through tenth grade.

They had tenth grade there?

Yes. And then to graduate, we had to come to an accredited high school.

Did you do that?

I finished high school in Austin.

Did you come back to your grandparents'?

Yes, the last two years.

Tell me about those two years that you were here in Austin, going to high school. Did the town change at all?

[laughs] What do you mean, "change"? Not very much, I don't think!

Was there a new school by then?

Yes. That school that s up...

That big school on the hill?

Yeah.

Now, was that the school for all the classes?

Yeah, a little bit.

For all the classes.

Where was that?

All of it. So it went right from kindergarten through high school?

At the high school, mostly, I guess. I never was a mixer [laughs] that much.

I don't believe they had kindergarten.

You liked your ranch work better than playing?

Or first grade?

Yeah.

Yes, first grade.

So you went there?

So when you came to Austin, would you still go back to the ranch weekends and vacations and work the ranch?

Yes.

Yes.

How many kids were in your high school class?

By then did you go up and back yourself, or did you have any transportation?

In my class, there was only six. Six of us graduated. I don't know, I think there were more at times.

Oh, once in a while we'd come in horseback, but not very often, though.

Who was your teacher?

Did you miss those horses when you had to stay in Austin?

Oh, we had more than one. Henry Nelson was the principal. I don't remember all the names of the teachers.

Yes.

That's okay. Were there any special areas of high school that you liked? Any courses you were interested in, more than others?

Which did you like better: being at the ranch or being here in Austin?

Ranch.

No, I don't think there were any special ones. We just took enough credits to graduate. [laughs]

Alright, now, you graduated high school. Now tell me what you did.

Did you have a social life with your high school friends?

Then I just went to work at the ranch.

Oh, a little.

Was your father still active?

Did you go to dances?

Yes.

And who was living at home by then, on the ranch?

Just my mother and my dad and myself. My brother and sister were going to school in Austin by that time. *They* were in high school.

I see, and so they'd come back weekends?

Yes.

So you were the main help for your dad?

I guess, yes.

Now that you're out of high school, what were your responsibilities on the ranch?

Well, I imagine I did more work. [laughs] I mean, or supposed to, anyhow. But just riding and haying in summer, and feeding cattle in the winter.

With less people in the house, and your mother having a little less work, what were some of the things your mother liked to do?

Oh, I don't know, she was always busy: canning, I guess, in the summer.

Did she have any special interests of her own?

No. She never drove, so she never got out by herself.

Was she kind of a "home person"?

Yes, I'd say that, more so.

Liked to take care of everyone?

Yeah.

Did she come [into Austin] to visit her parents? Oh, she didn't drive.

No.

Did she ride horseback?

Very little.

So she didn't go unless someone went.

No.

Tell me more about the ran Did you acquire more acreage as the years went along?

No.

Is the ranch still there?

Yes, still there.

Still yours?

No. [laughs] It's been sold at least four times since we sold it.

Okay. Now, when you were still on the ranch, how many acres was that ranch?

I believe it was a little over fourteen hundred acres.

Pretty big. Did the house stay the same?

Yes. They've modernized it now.

How long was the ranch an active ranch? How old were you when finally it was sold?

Oh, when it was sold? In 1960 we sold it.

When did your father die?

He died in 1937. I ran it for twenty years.

Oh, my goodness! And how long did your mother live?

Oh, she lived until 1974.

Oh, fine, so she was there. Was it just you and your mom?

For a while, yes.

Did your brother come back to the ranch?

He came back for a while, but then he went to the university.

In Reno?

In Reno. And when he graduated, then he went to work. I think he went to work for the Forest Service first, and then the BLM (Bureau of Land Management).

Really?! Where?

Oh, I don't know.

Was it in Nevada?

Partly in Nevada, partly in California.

And what about your sister?

She went and taught school, and then she got married, and she's living in Wells.

Now, where did she teach school, do you know?

Down in Caliente, Nevada, and then in Wells. That's where she met her husband.

And then she got married?

Yes.

She stayed there?

Yes, she's still there.

Did you hire workmen to help you? You can't run a ranch alone.

Oh, yes.

Who would you hire?

Oh, I had a lot of different on mostly just one extra man, until haying season, or gathering cattle.

Where would you get your help?

Around Austin. Some were, what do you call it, transient help.

Was there a place where you could put up a notice? Or how did you find them?

No, word of mouth.

Were they mostly real young men, maybe high school? or older?

Quite a few Indian boys.

That lived in the area?

In the area

Tell me a little about the Indian population in this region. Is there a colony?

Well, years before they put this reservation up Reese River, every ranch, nearly, had an

Indian family lived on it, you know, and they'd work for the...Like the haying season, the man or if he had some older boys, they'd work for the rancher. And the Indian lady would help the mother in the house, you know. But after they put the Indian reservation up here, then all the Indians went on the reservation.

Do you know when that was, approximately?

Right before World War II. I'd say about 1940 or so.

Oh, okay. Did you have an Indian family living on your ranch?

Not permanently, but we have had them living there for a while.

SA. What kind of living accommodations would they have?

Most of them had their tents.

Brought their tents with them?

Yeah.

But then would you go to the reservation and hire?

They wouldn't leave the old ones work off of the reservation anymore. But you could get some of the sons, some of the younger ones.

Okay, and they would come and work with you?

Yes.

How far is that Indian reservation from Austin?

About forty miles. It's in Nye County.

Oh, in Nye County. Okay, that's why I haven't heard too much about it, I suppose.

Yeah, it's up Reese River, south from here.

I saw a lot of Indians in town for the Gridley Days.

Oh, yes! [laughs]

Did they come from the reservation?

Most of them.

I see. Do they come into Austin very much?

Quite a little.

Now back to the ranch, you and your mom. So you had all the responsibility?

Yes.

You were it.

Yeah.

Tell me, did the ranch change? Did you add cattle? Did it stay the same?

Stayed about the same. You kept about the same amount of cattle every year.

Were there any periods of time when there were either droughts or heavy storms or floods that created some really bad problems for you?

Yes.

Describe some of them.

We had droughts.

What would happen?

Well, generally have to buy hay.

Where would you buy it?

Oh, from mostly Fallon, I mean, at the time—1934, you’ve heard of the drought years, it was real dry. And sometimes they sold part of the cattle, you know, and buy feed for the others.

Did you have to do that?

My dad did. I never had to.

What was it like during the Depression years? Were you affected?

Not seriously. We never had a lot of money, but we never were destitute or anything like that. Always had plenty to eat.

Were you still able to sell your cattle?

Oh, yes, but they didn’t bring very much money, though.

But you were able to manage?

Yes, we managed.

Tell me a little about the war years. Did that have any affect here in this area?

Yes, it did. [laughs]

Tell us.

I went to the Army for three-and-a-half years.

I thought they would defer people on farms.

I was deferred until Pearl Harbor.

Oh! Then they took away deferment?

Yeah, you betcha, especially single.

So tell me what happened to your ranch when you had to go.

Well, they called me into the draft office and asked if my brother could run the ranch. He was about seventeen, I guess.

And how old were you?

And I was twenty-three about that time. See, I’m five years older than he is.

And he was single?

Oh, yes. They asked me if he could run the ranch, and I said I guess he could—I mean, truthfully. And so I was in the Army!

So did he come back to run the ranch?

Yes. Well, that was summertime then, and he came back for the summer. He was going to the university in Reno at that time, and he came back to the ranch for the summer. Then he didn’t go back to the university for I-don’t-know-how-many years.

He stayed at the ranch until you came out?

Well, they got him finally, too.

How come?

[laughs] Ask the Draft Board!

Well who took care of the ranch?

My mother got an uncle to come.

Oh, for goodness sakes! See, I thought that they would at least leave one home.

Well they did, for quite a while. When did they draft him? They drafted me in 1942, and I think he got drafted in 1944.

Where did you have to go, in the war?

I just went to the Hawaiian Islands.

And how long were you there?

Two-and-a-half years.

And where did your brother go?

He ended up going to Okinawa, and then he ended up with the Army of Occupation in Japan for six months or more. I got discharged in 1945, after the war. And he got discharged in 1946, I think it was.

And he was okay?

Oh, yes.

What was it like for a ranching fellow, who had never been out of Austin, to go to Hawaii?

[laughs] Well, it was good experience! I didn't like Army life, though. I went to Arkansas first.

For training?

For training. And then I ended up in Ohio. And then the outfit I got assigned to, went to Hawaii.

I see. And were you homesick for the ranch?

For a while, yes.

Wasn't it hard for your mom?

I imagine it was.

Did you correspond? Did you write to each other?

Oh, yeah. Yes, we wrote.

Did she write you letters?

Yes, she did.

Was it real, real hard for her, having you away?

I suppose. I don't know.

So you said your uncle...

Yes, her brother.

Came to run the ranch?

Yes.

Did he have a family?

Well, no. I mean, he had a wife and a daughter, but they weren't living together then.

Okay, so he was alone.

Yes, he was alone.

Now, when you came back—I want to ask several questions—number one, was the ranch well taken care of? was it fine?

It was line.

Did it look the same?

Yes.

Looked better, I bet, to your eyes.

Yes, it probably did.

What about Austin?

[laughs] It didn't change very much.

No changes?

I never had a furlough all the time I was in. I got back to Austin three years from the day I left here. [laughs]

Nothing changed? [laughing]

Not very much.

So you just came back like it stood still?

Just about.

So then tell me, you went back to the ranch, and then what? Then you got right back into the ranching?

Yeah, got right back into ranching.

Did it feel good to do that?

Yes.

Did you still have the same amount of cattle?

Yes, I think so.

How was your mom when you returned?

Oh, fine.

Did she do some of the ranching, too, by then?

Not very much, no. She never was one to work outside very much.

Oh, I see. Did she plant a vegetable garden?

Yes. Well, we'd all plant it, you know.

How many years were you there running the ranch? and were there any changes that you should tell us about?

You mean until we sold?

Yeah.

Oh, I don't know how many changes.

Did the prices finally get higher?

Yes.

Did you make a little more?

Yes.

Tell us about those periods, Is there anything to tell?

No.

Did you get busier?

I imagine we got busier with more government restrictions—the Forest Service, you know.

Well, describe specifically your ranch, how it affected you, how it changed your ranch.

I don't know how you'd put it—getting along with the U.S. government, I guess.

Well, by telling the restrictions, and how you had to change your ranching, specifically. In other words, you said "getting along with them." They must have told you to do something.

Sure, they had more government regulations. And it's worse now than it was then!

We need to know, at your ranch, what the government told you to do, that changed the way that you handled your cattle.

Oh, you put them out on the range a certain time every year, or different years, they'd change.

So that they would go to different places so that it would preserve the areas?

I guess, yes.

So that the land—you'd go to one place, they'd eat there, and then the next year, so it would give time for the...

I imagine that's what it was for, yes.

What else changed?

Well, one thing, after the railroad went out, that's when the trucks started hauling stock, and then they would come to the ranches and get the livestock.

Did that make it easier?

Yes, yes it did.

About how many times a year did you sell your cattle?

Most of the time, just once, in the fall. But they started an auction barn in Fallon, after World War II.

I've been to that. The Stockade, yes.

After that, then the ranchers would haul some of their own to that sale yard.

Is that the main sale yard in the whole area?

That's the *only* sale yard in Nevada!

I didn't know that.

Yes sir! They have a few special sales, like Elko has a special sale once in a while, and Reno does once in a great while. But the every-week sale, Fallon is the only one in Nevada.

So they come from all over?

Yes, they do.

I didn't realize that. Did you go?

I did in later years.

Do you get a better price when you do it through an auction?

Sometimes. I won't say all the time, but sometimes.

What then would the advantage be of going to the auction, over selling it directly to buyers?

Well, one advantage, I guess, is you have more buyers compete, to bid on your livestock, you know. But I don't know. Either way, you have to see what you would get on the ranch for them. If you got an idea

what the auction was bringing, you could have it in your head, whether you're going to sell on the ranch. And that's still true right now.

Is there some way to find out what the selling price is in the state?

Fallon has it on the radio, oh, I don't know how many times a day.

So you would turn that on?

Yes.

Oh, I see, that's good.

I hear it right now.

Good, so you have an indication.

Yeah, you've got an idea. And then newspapers too.

Oh, good. Like the Stock Market, only it would be the cattle.

Yeah. I've got the livestock paper.

Oh, very good. So how long did you run that ranch?

Until 1960.

Until 1960. And what made you decide to sell?

Well, it was more a family deal than anything. My brother wanted some money. After my father died, it was left to my mother and the three children.

Uh-huh, to be divided equally?

Yes. They wanted the money, and I didn't want to buy it personally, and Mother was getting elderly, and so that was why we sold it.

I see. And so it was a family decision.

Yes.

And how did you feel about that? That was your life.

Well, I missed it.

I mean, when they were going to sell it, did it make you kind of sad?

Yes, yes, it did.

Now, why didn't you want to buy it out? Too much money?

Yes.

Couldn't do that.

No.

So tell me, then, first, number one, who did you sell it to?

Sold it to a fellow by the name of Walt Whitaker and Wayne Whiteman from Fallon.

Two people?

They were partners, yeah.

Tell me then, where did your mother go?

She came to Austin, to this house here.

Oh, to this house?

Yeah.

Did she buy it?

No, it belonged to my aunt, and we rented it from my aunt until my aunt passed away. She deeded it to me.

Where did your aunt live when you moved into this house?

Right across the street.

In other words, she owned this property.

She lived here first, before.

And then she bought another house?

She bought the other house.

Did she buy it when your mother was coming?

No, she bought it before then.

And rented it?

I don't remember. This was vacant, I know, when we moved in here.

Okay, so you and your mom moved into this house?

Yes, but I didn't stay here very long. I went to work at a ranch down in Smokey Valley the next spring.

Oh, okay. Well, let's back up a little bit. You sold the ranch—did that include all the cattle and the house and everything on it?

Yes.

Everything.

I kept two horses.

Oh, good! You brought them here?

No, my brother...He's got another ranch out here.

Where?

Out on Blackbird, on the highway. He doesn't have any stock now.

How far away is that from Austin?

Oh, it's about nine miles.

Oh, very close. So you're all close.

Well, you go out to Smokey.

Did he marry?

Yes.

So he's there with a family?

He was then.

You moved here. This is a very nice house. Was it like this?

I think my aunt had it fixed up—some of this paneling. I know she put in that window when my mother came here.

Very nice. Did Austin change at all from the forties to the sixties?

[laughs] I imagine it changed some, you know, but not a lot.

The same people living here? You knew the same ones?

Well, there's not too many old-timers left around Austin.

So there were more in the sixties that you knew?

Yes.

So how long after you moved here did you start working on that other ranch?

About six months.

And what ranch was that?

Where I worked? It was Kingston Canyon and the Gilman Ranch down there.

Oh, I just saw that yesterday! Beautiful area.

The party I worked for had an interest in that Kingston Ranch. That's before all this development—it was a cattle ranch at that time.

And did you live there?

I lived at the Gilman Ranch.

What did you live in?

They moved a house in there.

So when you moved there, I know the Young Ranch was there, the Youngs.

Oh, yeah, that's an old-time ranch.

I interviewed them yesterday. Who else was there in that valley, beside the Youngs?

Welt, Bells lived across the road at Gilman.

And they had a ranch?

Well, no, it's not a ranch. They had a gas station and a garage there at the time, and then they had a few acres.

Now they're just starting to develop, I noticed, close to Gilman and Kingman.

Yes.

None of that was there?

No.

Were the campgrounds there in the canyon?

The Forest [Service] campground was there, yes.

Did a lot of fishermen go there?

Yes.

So what were your responsibilities on the ranch where you were working?

Well, they had cattle. The fellow that owned it bought cattle, and I had cattle, and I had to hay.

Were you in charge of that place?

Yes, I was the man in charge.

They didn't live there?

No.

Oh, okay. So that must have been fun. I mean, it must have been nice being your own boss there. Did you like that?

Yeah. Well, yeah, I liked it.

Did you have your horse there?

Yes, they raised hay.

Oh yes! And they had a couple of horses of their own too.

And you got workmen when you needed help?

Were you all alone?

Yes.

Well, not *all* the time, but I was alone a *lot* of the time.

How long did you work there?

Did you ever have a chance to take off and explore that beautiful canyon?

Oh, seven years. That's when they sold it to this developer.

Oh! What year was that, that they sold it?

Well I was the same as raised around Kingston. I mean, I've been up the canyon a lot of times, fishing and all that.

1967 was the last year. I guess that's the year they sold, I think.

The Bertrands took me all the way over to the other side.

Oh. Was that developer who's developing that also developing those bigger homes near the opening to the canyon?

Oh, you went over the mountain? [laughs]
That's a nice drive.

Yes, I guess. James Kielhack. He had another partner.

I never saw such beautiful country.

Did you interact with the Young family?

Yeah, that's a nice drive.

Some. I didn't always get along with them all that good. [laughs]

So you lived in a beautiful area!

Were there water rights problems? Things like that?

Yeah!

Yes, there were.

Was that kind of peaceful?

Did you come into Austin? Were you able ever to leave?

Yes.

And fortunately, you're a man who doesn't mind being alone.

I came to Austin once a week, at least, you know.

No.

Maybe you prefer it! [laughs] There were cattle—did he raise hay?

Was your life mainly the ranching? most of your time there right at the ranch working?

Yes.

Did you have private time to do what you wanted?

Oh, yes.

Did you go fishing?

Yes:

Alone, or with others?

Oh, generally have somebody. Sunday, somebody would come out from Austin and go fishing.

Any special close friends that would enjoy doing that?

Oh, my aunts, and then Lee and his family came a few times.

Who's Lee?

My brother.

Okay. You called him Lee.

Leroy and me.

Did you have a radio? Did you play any cards?

I had radio, yeah. I always had a battery radio.

Did you and your friends ever get into card games?

Yeah, once in a while.

What happened when the ranch was sold? Then what did you do?

They sent me to another ranch down in Nye County.

The same owner?

One of them was part of the same owner. And I worked down at the Millet Ranch for, well, how many years? About six years down there, I guess.

See, you had developed an expertise. You never had to be out of work! [laughs] You must have been a very good worker! Was it the same kind of a ranch there?

Yeah. It was a little different: they didn't have much range. The livestock were all inside...private land, I guess.

Because there wasn't much government land there, like there is here?

Yes. Well, the ranch didn't have that government land, I guess.

You mean they didn't have rights?

Yeah, that's right.

There's a different rule in that county?

I guess they never took out their rights, or something like that.

Oh, I see. So how long did you stay there at Nye County?

Well, let's see. Well, I didn't go down 'til 1971. I was down there seven years or so, I guess.

So there was a three-year interim?

That's when I worked part-time at Kingston, for the developers there at that time.

Oh, you worked for them—okay. Tell me about that.

I put up fences for them. I did irrigating.

Did you stay down there?

No, I still stayed at Gilman, because they owned that. See, they bought Gilman too. I still stayed there, but I had to run back and forth part of the time.

Ah-ha. So tell me a little more: What were they developing?

Lots.

Who were they going to sell them to?

Anybody that would buy them!

Who bought them?

A lot of Las Vegas people bought lots there.

Why?

Because they wanted a place to get out of the heat, I imagine.

Oh, that's a good idea Like a second home, vacation home?

Yeah. And there's some there yet, I mean, some of those people, yeah.

Oh, that's a good idea. So what were some of the things that you did besides the fences?

Oh, just a little bit of everything.

Well, tell me what a little bit is. [laughs]

Well, put fences around the yards and sprinkler systems for their lawns and stuff like that, you know. They had a regular guy that worked there, and I was his helper.

Alright, now let me ask this: Did they sell lots and people built their own houses or brought their own trailers? Or did they sell houses?

Well, they sold houses first. They didn't want no trailers. But they ended up leaving trailers come, because they found out they couldn't sell their lots. People wanted to bring trailers, see.

Yes. Now, when they built houses for people to buy houses and lots, were you there during that period?

I was there during part of the period, yeah.

Did you have anything to do with building the houses?

No, I didn't.

Did the houses start to sell pretty quickly when they opened up?

I don't know. Some of the people built their own houses—got a contractor, you know.

What did the lots sell for?

I don't know.

Did people from Austin buy any?

Ha! Very few! [laughs] They tried to sell me one!

You didn't want to live there?

No, not to live, no.

Then you stayed there during that three years was it?

Well, yeah, I was there between three years and when I went down to that other ranch.

And how long did you stay in Nye County at that ranch?

Come back down here in 1978. There'd be seven years, I guess.

Then what did you do? Was your mother still alive?

Yes, she was still alive yet then.

Did you come back to this house?

I come back, but I worked out of here the rest of the time.

Doing what?

I worked on a ranch out here, took care of it in the winter.

What does "out here" mean?

Smokey Valley and Lander County. And then I got a job: part-time brand inspector.

Describe what that is and when you started that, and who hired you.

The State of Nevada hired me, but I started it when I was at our old home ranch.

Oh, a long time ago?

Yeah, but it was just a little part-time job then. Now, it's ended up being nearly a full-time job.

What year did you start doing it?

I don't remember exactly when it went in.

Do you know how old you were, about?

I think about 1958 or so, they started it.

How did they happen to hire you?

Some of the rancher neighbors recommended me.

Oh, good.

That's how they happened to hire me, I guess.

Okay. So when you worked part-time, how many hours or days? When did you do that?

We don't work a special time.

Let's go back to when you first started part-time.

We're not on salary.

Okay, hourly.

Still not on salary.

It's hourly?

Yes, we put our hours down and our mileage. But at first, they didn't pay for mileage—we used our own.

Let's go back to the very first when you started. I want you to describe in full detail what you did on that hourly job, part-time. Describe it.

Well, you just looked at the livestock that are being shipped that they got the iron belonged to the rancher. And you have a special form that you fill out.

Is this at those corrals where they were...

Well, anybody's corral. By that time, there was no railroad. You'd go to the individual ranch.

Did they assign the ranches that you were to go to?

No, they called me. You go by call. They had more than one inspector, see.

What would they say when you go by call? What would they tell you?

That they were going to ship cattle at a certain time, a certain date...

At a certain ranch?

At a certain ranch.

Okay, so you didn't have to determine that?

No.

Then tell me what you would do, again.

Well, you'd check the cattle and count them and write out a sheet of paper.

Okay, make sure they have that brand?

Right.

And what do they call that? Brand inspector?

Brand inspector.

So then after you came back here from Nye County, did you start to work?

I was still brand inspector, but I worked at a couple of different ranches, just temporarily.

So ever since then, they've been calling you to do [brand] inspecting?

Yes. Now I'm semi-retired, and I do the brand inspecting part-time.

And that's your main work that you do?

Yes.

About how many hours a week or a month? How often are you called to do this?

You never know! [laughs]

So you have to be here? How much notice do they give you?

They're supposed to give you twenty-four-hour notice.

That's not very much!

No, it isn't

You can't leave town—you'll lose the job!

[laughs] But some of them tell you two or three days before.

Are there periods that are busier than others?

Yes.

What season would that be?

It'd be in the fall and early winter season.

How far around the county do you go?

Oh, about a fifty-mile radius from Austin. I go into Nye County, northern Nye County, and half-way to Battle Mountain.

That's an interesting job, isn't it? Do you like it?

Yes! It's a good part-time job for me now, you know. I'm getting too old. For age, I thought maybe they'd [laughs] ask me to retire before now, but they haven't.

Well, you're so experienced, you probably do a better job! So that also helps you learn about all the different ranches in the area.

Oh, yes!

What can you tell us that would add to the knowledge of the county from that work that you can tell us? Any specific ranches of interest?

A lot of them have changed hands—I mean, different owners. Some of them have consolidated.

As I was changing tapes you mentioned the Inchauspes.

I don't know how many different ranches they've bought—at least three or four, all consolidated.

I see. Are they one of the larger ones?

Yes, they're one of the larger ones in Lander County, in this end of Lander County.

I see. And what others have grown?

Well, Toiyabe out here. Well, they call it Reese River Cattle Company now. They're a big outfit.

Oh! Are they scattered, or combined?

No, it's fairly combined, but two or three ranches in that area

Where is that?

It's right south of Austin, fourteen miles, going towards lone.

Are they one of the larger ones?

Yes.

Did they buy out small ranches? Is that how they do it?

Yes.

Are there any others of importance?

Oh, large ones. Not in this end of Lander, I guess. Grass Valley Ranch, Molly Knudtsen's is one of the larger ones. Well, she bought two smaller outfits too, with that.

Is that hers, or is it partnership?

It's in her name, let's put it that way.

Who runs it?

Her second husband—her first husband's dead.

Okay, so she has someone there running it.

Oh yes, oh yes.

And that's one of the big ones?

Oh, yes.

Was that the biggest one in Grass Valley?

Yes, it is the biggest one in Grass Valley.

Was it when you were there, the biggest one?

Yes.

Always was the biggest one?

Yes, but it's a little bigger, on account of she bought two more small ranches.

I see. Now, did any of these ranches ever have sheep?

Some of them did. The only one that has sheep any more is Inchauspes.

I see. In some of the interviews and research that I did, I read about the controversy between the cattlemen and sheepmen, because of the grazing. Do you have anything to tell us about that?

There wasn't much of that around here. The sheep had their own area, and I don't remember any problems.

You don't remember any problems about that?

Not that many problems, no.

Did the sales of cattle change during ups and downs of the economy?

Oh yes!

Did it affect your work? Like, would there be less inspection because of less shipping?

Well [laughs] you never know how many. I never keep track of how many stock I inspect a full year. The state office has got that.

No, but I just meant, did you notice, were there periods when you weren't called as often?

Oh, yes! There is now! This time of the year is the down season.

I see. Has the cattle business and the economy changed much over the last period?—last twenty years, let's say. Is it still as busy an industry? are cattle selling as much?

Well, I think the prices are better right now than they have been. And they have been better.

What causes that?

[laughs] I don't know. But everything else is raised, too, though. I mean, what you pay. So I don't know.

Before we leave the brand inspecting that you're doing, is there anything else you can tell us about that brand inspection and the cattle ranches in Lander County? Have there been many new people coming in and buying ranches?

No, I don't think there is. It stays about the same.

Now I want to change the subject a little bit. Tell me, did you get involved in mining?

No, never.

Never staked claims, never mined?

No.

Was there ups and downs in minings around here that changed the region, with people coming in or leaving?

Just a little, really. Around Austin here, there hasn't been.

Not around Austin?

No, there hasn't been much mining.

Now, I understand from an interview with the Youngs yesterday, that there's a lot of activity in the Round Mountain area.

That's Nye County. Oh yes, there's a lot of people down there.

Have some of those people moved into the Kingston area?

I think there is a few, yes.

So that isn't that far to commute?

No.

Do you think that more people are coming into this whole region—not necessarily the town part of Austin?

Oh, not many.

I notice the Forestry brings in new younger people. Have you had any interaction, or noticed much going on since the Forestry is here?

Well, they have more help, alright.

I know there's a lot of young families coming in.

Yes.

Do they interact in the community? Do you get to see them around or know them?

Some. But [the] Forest [Service] never leaves them too long. They rotate their people very [laughs] fast.

Oh, in other words, they come and go? Change?

Yes, they do. They seem to be, that's the way they run. They don't want their people to get too entrenched—I imagine to be favoritism or something. That's just my idea.

Uh-huh, but they come and go?

Yes, they do.

The Sheriff's Department seems to be very active here. For a small town, I see a lot of sheriff cam around, and patrolling. How big is that Sheriff's Department?

The Sheriff lives in Battle Mountain. These are his deputies. He might come once a month or once [every] two weeks or something like that.

How many sheriff deputies are there here?

I believe they've got three, and then they've got one or two relief deputies, too—I believe they have.

Do they serve the role of policemen?

Yeah. Well, and they have a Highway Patrol too.

And Highway Patrol. So the sheriffs, do they handle any...

They handle all the local...I think the Highway Patrol handles the traffic on the highway.

If there's any problem in town, is it the sheriffs that are called?

Well, I guess you could call them.

What is their main role, the sheriffs? Do you know?

[laughs] Take care of the law and order, I guess.

Okay, so they're like the policemen?

Yeah, same thing.

Has Austin changed at all? It's one of the rare places where people leave their doors open and leave their car doors open. Has that changed recently? Is it still as safe?

Well, I don't say it's *still* as safe, but it's not too bad.

Compared to other places?

No, that's right. I think it's better than a lot of places.

Yes, that's one of the things that impressed me. Would that be part of it, because it's kind of isolated, and everyone knows each other?

Yes, I think so.

I notice there's a new school down in the valley coming up near the Forestry. Can you tell anything about it?

No, I've never been around it—only to a basketball game, or something like that.

Was there a lot of action by the community to get the school?

Yes.

Did you participate in any of that?

No.

The other thing I want to ask is, I know that for a long, long time, there was the voting to move the county seat from Austin to Battle Mountain. I've read and heard a lot of controversy. From the Austin side—because I want to have both sides—what were some of the things going on here during those times when there were elections to move it? What was happening in Austin?

I don't know. Nothing special was happening. Of course Austin didn't want it moved, no!

Of course.

But they knew they were going to have to, in time, because on account of the number of people on each end, you know.

Was there any public action to get votes?

There was antagonism against Battle Mountain alright.

How has it affected Austin since the county seat moved to Battle Mountain?

Now, I don't think too much.

What happened at the time?

At first, though, it took quite a few people out of Austin.

Uh-huh, to go down there to live, to work?

Yes. Of course, there were some locals here—treasurers and Clerks—but after the next election, then very few ran for office from here.

Oh, because they'd have to move?

And then most of the people are Battle Mountain outside of a commissioner. They've got a branch office for the assessor.

Here?

Here. And the Sheriff's Department. That's all.

I see. And how else did it affect Austin?

I guess it's not quite as convenient, if you have to go to the courthouse.

That's what the Battle Mountain people said when they had to come to Austin!

That's right, that's true.

It's hard for both.

Yeah.

I understand that the bank closed here.

Yes.

So you lost your bank?

Yeah.

What do you do for banking?

I bank in Battle Mountain.

Can you do it by mail?

Oh yes!

You do it by mail?

Yeah, some.

But you travel?

I go once a month down there sometimes.

During the years that you have lived here, where did you do your shopping for supplies, for shoes, for things that you couldn't get here? Where would you go?

Well years ago they had a dry goods store here, like. But Fallon is the main shopping.

How often would you go to Fallon?

Well, once or twice a year, maybe. [laughs] More so since you got better transportation, better cars and that now.

That's right too.

Twenty or thirty years ago, maybe, well, you went twice a year.

When you go, did you ever make an outing out of it? Do other things while you were there? Either Fallon or Battle Mountain?

No, generally a one-day trip. But you do other things beside just going to the bank, though.

Shop?

Shopping. Yeah, I always do a little shopping.

Do you go in a restaurant to eat?

Eat lunch, yes.

How much of your family are left here?

Right here, of the Streshleys?

Yeah, of your family.

Me and my brother.

And your aunts and the rest are gone?

All passed away. And I have a cousin, Joy Brandt.

Oh, is she your cousin?!

Yeah. She's a first cousin. Her mother was Streshley.

Okay. Almost everyone is related to someone, when I interview! Wonderful! And I met her daughter and granddaughter at the Toiyabe Restaurant where her daughter works. Now, with your work, which is interesting, and your real nice home, tell me what your life is like now in Austin? What are some of the things that you do?

Oh, kind of quiet life. [chuckles] Go to the senior center and eat lunch.

That's a nice place to congregate.

Yeah!

And what else? Do you ride the horse yet?

No, I broke my leg in 1985.

Oh! How did you do that?

Oh, I fell off of a fence. [laughs] Oh, its alright. It's healed up alright, but I haven't ridden a horse since.

Now, I want to know something, because it ties in with what I was going to ask you: When you broke your leg, and there's no hospital here... Where were you when you broke it?

I was out on the ranch out here. They hauled me to Austin in the back of a van, and then the Lander County Ambulance took me to Battle Mountain and then I went to Elko.

The thing that I observe, and that everyone tells me, since there is no hospital here and no doctor...Like your emergency

Yeah, it is hard for doctoring, alright.

So when you had to do all that, was there someone who knew how to handle you properly [JS laughs] until you got to a doctor?

[laughing] I don't know whether they handled me properly or not, but they got me there and didn't hurt me any, that much.

Okay, now what about the expense of that kind of an ordeal?

I was working for the State, and Nevada Industrial paid for the whole thing.

So you were lucky to have all that insurance?

Yes, I was.

Because I've talked with people who didn't have all that insurance, what it would cost.

Oh yes.

Is there any discussion or hope of having better medical care here?

I doubt it. They've got a nurse practitioner comes once a week. I think she comes from Eureka.

[sarcasm] So the important thing is not to get hurt until the day she's here? [laughs]

[laughs] And then the state health nurse, Helen Thompson, from Battle Mountain, comes to the senior center once a month.

I see. Was that when she takes blood pressures?

Yeah. And then she gives flu shots and things like that. But she does other work too. She vaccinates babies and stuff. She has an office over to the courthouse. But that's all the medical we have.

Yes. So that's a hardship for people as they get older.

In a way, for elderly people, you know. Or anybody in emergencies.

Having babies, if they don't get to the hospital in time.

Yeah.

Also, I know I tried to interview some who were in Reno in the hospital, and I wasn't able to, because they were away. Tell me what you

think is the future of Austin. Do you see any mining coming in? What do you see, let's say, in the next ten years?

I don't see any mining. Of course, I'm no miner, so I don't know.

What about the ranchers? Do you see that growing?

No. [laughs] No, I don't. With all the government regulations, there'll probably be less ranchers in ten years.

Now tell me more: When you just say "government regulations," for the benefit of people studying this later, what would be the regulations that would discourage the ranchers?

The grazing rights.

Grazing rights? Tell us what grazing rights are.

Every ranch has an allotment on either Forest Service or BLM (Bureau of Land Management) land to run so many cows on it, and they pay a fee. Every year they talk about raising this fee up. And if they ever get it *too* high, the ranchers won't be able to afford it.

I just learned through the commissioners' meeting, and also listening to [Secretary of the Interior Bruce] Babbitt, it's already in effect that if ranchers register—and I also talked with Mr. Young—and follow the conservation, then they don't raise the fees.

[derisively] Ehhhhh!

Do you know that?

No.

He's already registered...You know, some have already registered. If they follow and work with them.

Well, I don't know.

You don't know that?

No.

This is new.

Yeah, it has to be new.

This is new. I wonder if there is a ranchers' organization for communication?

Oh yes! Nevada Cattlemen's Association.

What are some things that I failed to ask you—because I don't know everything about this region—that you might want to tell us that would help others studying later, reading about this region, that you can tell us?

Gosh, I don't know.

I read in the early research that I did of the early years, that Austin was always the center of the Fourth of July celebrations, and people would come from not only Battle Mountain, but other counties. Did you participate in some of those Fourth of July celebrations? Can you describe them?

No. Most of them were before my time, I think. That was the oldtimers.

And they would have auto races and ball games?

Yeah, they had ball games, horse races...

Was that all before your time?

Mostly. I can't remember.

What kind of celebrations do they have in Austin now?

They have their roping arena down here. And they have the Gridley Days.

Where's the arena?

In the bottom of town, over the hill from the cemetery.

Oh, over near the Forest Service.

No, on the other side.

You go to the cemetery, and then where do you turn?

You turn left.

Okay, I haven't been there.

Yeah, they're down there today—the kids are, I think.

This afternoon?

Yes.

Okay, so is that an annual kind of an event? Every year?

Well, Gridley Days is annual. And that roping, I think they have that a couple of times around Labor Day, I believe. And then during the summer, they have their own little local get-together down there once or twice a week.

Doing roping?

Yeah. Austin Roping Club, they call it. But that's just happened in the last four or five years, they've done that.

I see. And then I see the beautiful park and swimming pool and baseball area.

That's fairly new too.

That was a nice improvement to the city.

Yes.

There's a lot of different churches in town here for a small town.

There's only one, really. Well, of the old churches, the only active one is the Episcopal. Catholic don't have any.

No, but they have the newer churches.

The Mormon, and then the Baptist.

Do they have a prominent role, any of them, in the community?

Not very much.

The senior center seems to be a wonderful focus for the older people here.

Yeah, it's nice alright.

Do you do your shopping over at Kent's when you need things?

Yeah. There's a lot of things you can't get there, though. And then I get it in either Battle Mountain or Fallon.

Uh-huh, when you go.

Yeah.

Then Madge Bertrand, of course they told me about the lumber and the hardware store.

Yeah, they've got a good hardware store here.

I saw, because of Gridley Days, another bar opened that I hadn't seen open before.

That's just open for three days. They got a three-day license or something.

Oh, was that just someone who got a license to open it up? Or the owners of the place?

No, it's firemen, I guess, or Roping Club. One of them organizations has got it for the three days. But that was an old bar.

I see. They cleaned it up for this?

[laughs] I guess! I never looked in! I don't know if they cleaned it up or not!

Is the Owl Club the main one in town?

Well, I don't know if it's the main one. The International has got a bar too.

Oh, the International, of course.

Owl Club's got two. They got another bar right up this end here. They call it The Pub.

Oh, is that theirs too?

Yeah, they bought that just last year.

Is there a lot of activity in those bars here, by the locals?

Yes, I think quite a little.

A place to go?

Uh-huh.

I read also that years ago, Austin—maybe the only place in Nevada, and maybe because of the church people—ruled that there be no gambling other than those few machines, and no prostitution. Was that during your time? Since all that's legal in Nevada anywhere else.

Yeah, I think it's probably during my time, yeah.

Do you remember anything about it?

Gambling, I don't know.

Just the slot machines—no table gambling.

I imagine they had gambling before, illegally.

No, it's legal through the whole state.

Yeah, I know it, but I mean before it was illegal, I imagine they did.

Yeah, before it was illegal. Was there a lot of meetings and things in town to get that passed, where it would be illegal?

I don't remember.

You were out on the ranch?

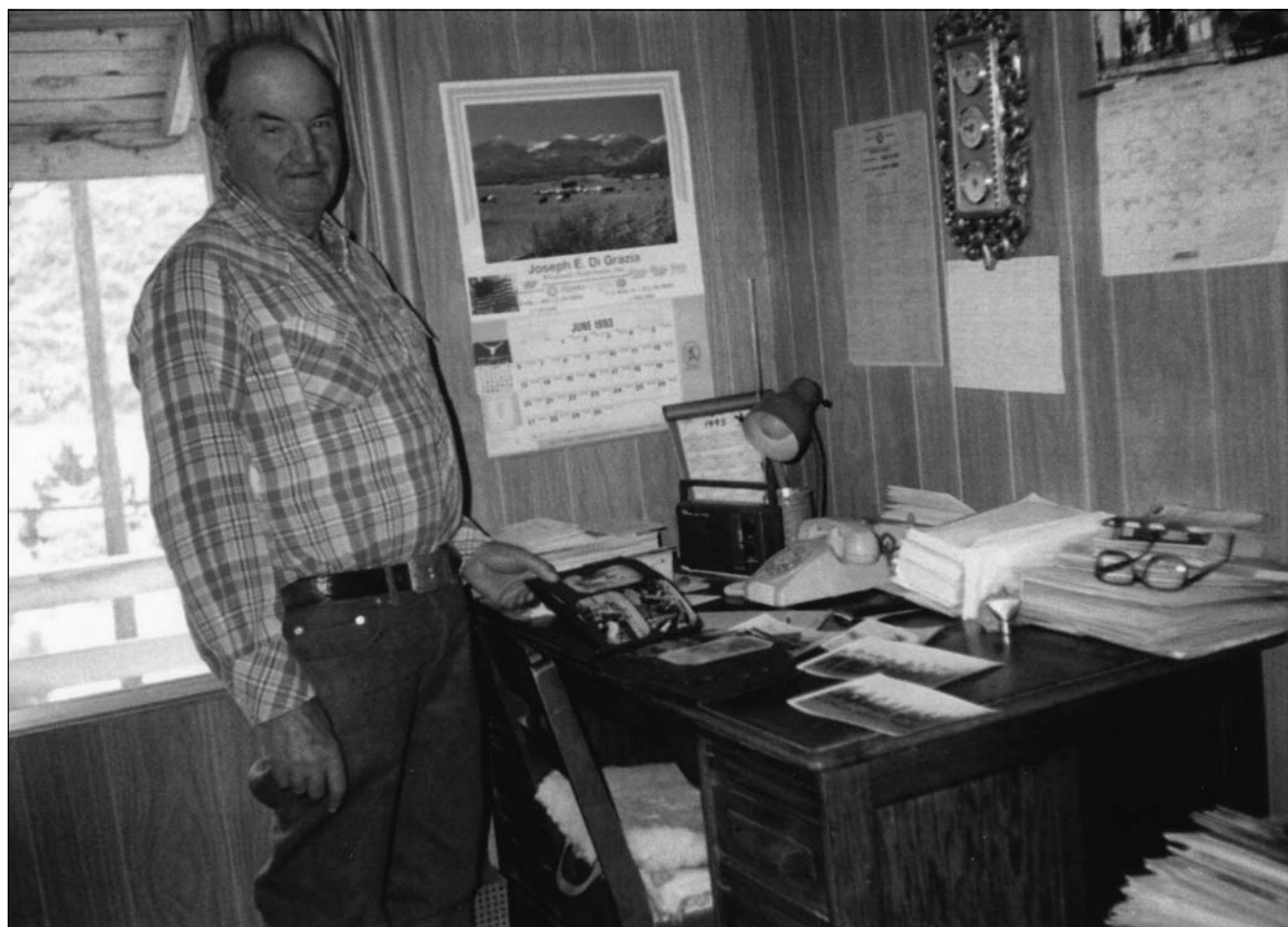
I guess so!

I just thought that was interesting. Well, is there anything else before we end the interview, that you might share?

Oh, I don't know. I think you covered most of it.

Well, if you think we've covered all of it, then I want to thank you so much for sharing. We learned a lot of new things through your interview today, and on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much. This is the end of the interview.

JOE STRESHLEY PHOTOGRAPHS



JOE STRESHLEY IN HIS HOME IN AUSTIN, JUNE 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Charlie Schmidtlein, Billy Givens, Joe Streshley, Frank Schmidtlein, Don Schmidtlein, Walter Schmidtlein, Len Ishmael, Bob Schmidtlein, and Doc Callaghan, June 1947.

(Original photograph owned by Joe Streshley)

JOE STRESHLEY
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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ESSIE ELIZABETH STRICKLAND**PREFACE**

Essie Elizabeth Strickland, born 1907 in Wisconsin, came West with her parents and two older sister when she was almost two years of age. She grew up on a family ranch in Idaho, and after graduating high school, took a job doing housework for a family to save for college to become a teacher.

Essie's first teaching job was at a ranch just across the Idaho-Nevada line in Jarbridge, near a big gold mine. She lived with a family where she met and married their son. It wasn't long before the children started to come. Essie continued to teach while raising six children. She tells about her experiences teaching in schools in Washoe Valley, Gold Acres, Battle Mountain and Austin, where she taught from 1961 until her retirement in 1974, then substituted another eight years. We learn how she was able to dedicate her life to teaching while raising her family in many different locations. Her interview reveals a life of adventure, hard work, strength and

happiness, surrounded by a large, loving family and many friends.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Essie Elizabeth Strickland at her home, in Austin, Nevada, and the date is May 10, 1993.

Good afternoon, Essie. I'm so pleased to be here interviewing you today. Could you tell us your name and where you were born?

Essie Strickland: My name is Essie Elizabeth Smith Strickland. I was born in Clark County, Wisconsin—a little town called Chili.

And what date were you born?

July 2, 1907.

I'm going to ask just a little bit about your life in Wisconsin, because mainly we want to concentrate on Nevada, but can you tell me a little bit about your mother and your father?

I was very young when I came west. I don't remember anything at all about living in Wisconsin. My mother and father were both raised in Wisconsin, and they were married there. And my two older sisters were born there. I was about twenty-two months old when we came west, so I don't remember that part.

When you say "came west," did they come to Nevada?

No, my father came to Montana. He had two brothers here in the West, and he liked to travel. He came west to Montana and took up a haying job. While he was haying there, they needed a cook, so he sent for my mother, and my mother and my two sisters and I came to Montana.

Did you live there long enough for you to have any recollections of life in Montana?

I don't remember anything at all about Montana. We must not have been there very long. Then we moved to Buhl, Idaho.

How long did you live there?

We came to Buhl probably about 1909 or 1910, and lived there until 1918, I believe.

So you were old enough to remember a little bit about it there?

I remember Buhl. I went to school there in the first three or four grades in the town of Buhl.

And what was your father doing in Buhl?

My father was a farmer. He leased some land and farmed. He also bought ten acres of land just about a quarter-mile from Buhl. Buhl was a very small town at that time. He put it all into fruit and into berries and built a home there for us.

When did either you and your family, or you alone, come to Nevada?

My family never *did* come to Nevada! I came to Nevada to teach school. I taught my first year of school here in Nevada.

Where did you go to high school and where did you get your teacher training?

We moved from Buhl to Emmett, Idaho, and that was in 1918. My father bought a 160-acre ranch there. We lived there, I went through grammar school and high school there.

And when did you decide you wanted to be a teacher? Did you decide that during your high school years, or later?

Later on, because I didn't decide while I was in high school. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. That was uppermost in my mind, I think, but my mother decided that I should take up a business course. She thought that business would be better for me than teaching.

And so what did you do then after high school?

I worked for a family in town, in Buhl, because my family lived about seven-and-a-half miles out in the country. And so I worked for a family for two years and did housework for them, and I got ten dollars a week for that!

I'll bet you saved a good part of that!

I was saving it for whatever I was going to need it for. Then I decided that I would go to school and learn to be a teacher.

Did you do that because there weren't any other options, or because you really liked to work with children or young people?

I really don't know! It's just something that other young people were doing, and I thought, "Well, perhaps that would be good for me." I had a cousin, though, that was going to go to Albion State Normal there in Idaho, and that was strictly a teacher college. So when my father and mother heard about her going there, they told me if I wanted to go, they would help me. This was during the Great Depression, so money was very, very scarce. And so with the money I had saved, and with what they gave me, I was able to go to college.

How old were you when you started college?

About nineteen years old when I went to school.

Tell me about those school years: how long did you have to go then, to train to be a teacher?

At that time, it was two years. Then we received our teacher's certificate, and we could teach for one year. And if we had taught one year successfully, then if we got a notice from our school we had taught and that the year had been successful, then they sent us a life certificate.

[laughs] And I'm assuming you had a very successful year?

I didn't teach in Idaho that first year. Teachers in Idaho at that time were getting

\$50.00 a month, or maybe \$40.00 a month: \$50.00 if they were seasoned teachers. I had a cousin working across the Idaho-Nevada line at a ranch, and he told me that the people at this ranch needed a teacher, and they were paying \$120 a month: Would I come there and teach school?

Now, what ranch was that, in what part of Nevada?

It was across the Idaho-Nevada line, not too far, in a little town called Jarbidge. There was a big gold mine there. But I didn't teach in town. The ranches were way out, probably sixteen miles out from this little town, way out in the desert. Every ranch there that had any children at all could have a school. At that time, a school could be started if there were five children in the district. And it could be held with only three children. There were three children in this family, and then they brought other children in to live with them to keep the school population up.

So apparently you accepted that offer?

Definitely, right away! [laughter]

You must have felt that it was a wonderful salary for the time period, and also because you were just starting out in your career. Now, what was it like when you came to this ranch, to this strange area, and your first responsibility to teach?—if you can remember how you felt, and what it was like.

Nevada, where I came was so different from what Idaho was. Idaho is a green state with farms and trees and flowers. And when I came up to Jarbidge, and I had to be driven out to the ranch, I saw nothing but sagebrush

and hills and more hills, and I just felt so lonesome! I almost felt homesick.

Did you have to live at the ranch?

Yes, I lived with the family. That was the only place there was to live. And the school was just a room off of the main building.

So you didn't have much of a private life?

Not really.

Describe what it was like teaching there and living there.

There was only the mother and father there, and the children would be in school. They had two girls. When I first went there, one of the older girls was there, but she left and went to Bruneau, Idaho. So there was just myself and the two children, and there were three other children from another family who came to live there so we'd have a quota of children.

How old were these children, approximately?

I had a first-grader and a third-grader, and I think a fourth-grader perhaps—they were small children.

Were you trained how to teach children in a small, one-room school?

Yes, I think that the college I went to was very thorough in their training. We did receive a wonderful education there. My certificate was especially for primary children, first grade through fourth grade.

What was the family environment like, and your role in that family, outside of school?

They were very nice. I didn't see too many other people. This was really the Old West, and the people there had cattle and horses and they could turn them out on the public domain—it wasn't like they have it now. So every now and then cowboys would come by, looking for their cows or their horses. So every once in a while, somebody would drop in, and a little company was always a little refreshing. And occasionally somebody would come out from Jarbidge, and they'd bring the mail out, because we didn't get to travel very much, they didn't have a car out there.

Oh, my! So you didn't have much of a young girl's life with any sociability?

Really, I *did* enjoy it, I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed the teaching, and later on, the family where I was, they had a young son that had been away from home, and he came home and then some of the daughters came in, later on in the winter. And we had a lot of fun. We'd go to dances in Jarbidge, sometimes. I found out that in Jarbidge, there were young people living there that I had known when I was in Buhl, Idaho!

Really?! What were they doing there?

There was a big mine there—they were all working in the mine. One of them I had known very well, and she used to ask me to come and stay with them overnight, and however long I wanted to. Sometimes when we'd go in there, there was a lot of snow and we had sleigh-riding parties. So really, it was nice.

How would you travel there?

Horseback, mostly. I was quite a horseman—I'd ridden horses all my life and

I loved horseback riding, and it was fun, I enjoyed it.

Now after that job, when and where did you move in your teaching career?

Well, I married the young son of the family the following August after school was out, and he built a cabin for us up there not too far from the ranch, because he and his father were ranching together there. It wasn't long until the children started coming.

Did you continue teaching until you had the children?

No, I just taught that one year.

Was it because married women couldn't teach, or that you didn't want to teach any more now that you were married?

The reason I didn't teach there was because I hadn't passed the Nevada School Law Test. After receiving an Idaho certificate to teach, we were allowed to teach in Nevada one year on that certificate. Then we had to take the Nevada School law test. This I did before I taught in Washoe Valley School. I took the test in Carson City capitol building.

And how long did you teach at Washoe Valley?

Two years. I was there in 1943 and 1944.

And your dad came to stay with you?

The second year, he came; because the first year, Hugh was there.

I'll bet the kids were glad to have Grandpop around!

Oh, they were, and he was a lot of company for us all.

Who took care of the children while you taught?

The boy was in school and I took the two little girls with me: one of them was four years old, the other was five years old. I took them with me, I made material for them, I drew lines and put numbers, and I told them, "You can play outside when you want to, but when you're in here, you're going to be quiet, and you're going to sit down." They had color books, whatever—but they went with me. And then the second year, of course, the older girl was in school, and the younger one just came along.

That's an era before today's stricter rules, so that was wonderful for the children and you.

Uh-huh.

So then when the two years ended, what did you do?

After the second year, while my husband was still working in Winnemucca on the railroad, we moved to Winnemucca. Of course, we could go on the train, you see, and anybody who worked on the train had free passes.

Oh, how wonderful!

And we packed up everything and moved to Winnemucca.

That must have seemed like a big city, and a reunion? I mean, compared to where you were teaching? Or was it little then?

No, it wasn't as big as it is now, I assure you! But I had been in towns, lived in towns,

as big as that other times. We enjoyed it there, but I was there only that summer. I put the children in school there, the boy and both the little girls were of school age then—and I put them all three in school there, because I thought, “Well, I hadn’t the school, so I probably wouldn’t be teaching,” and besides, I was having a new baby, and she was born that summer while we were there.

Oh my! So then there were four.

During the summertime, after the baby was born, a lady came to see me that I had known when we lived in Beowawe, and she had known that I had been a teacher. Her family was in a place called Gold Acres, which was about thirty miles south of Beowawe, and it was an open-pit gold mine. She told me they needed a teacher out there, would I please go out there and teach school? If I would go, they would furnish me a house and utilities, and they would get a babysitter for the new baby. I couldn’t turn that down! So I took the children out of school and we all got on the train and moved to Beowawe where Hugh’s mother lived, and then had to get a stage from there to go out to the mine, which was thirty more miles.

Oh my! Now, did Hugh come with you?

No, he was on the railroad working yet.

And how many miles was it from Winnemucca to where you moved back to teach?

Well, it’s fifty miles from Beowawe, and we took the train there. And Hugh’s mother lived there in Beowawe, so we stayed there. The only way we could get out to the mine was through the mail truck. And so we were

transported out to the mine with the mail truck.

Two questions: First, you said “We were transported.” Do you mean anyone who was going out to the mine—you and others?

The children were mine.

Oh, your children came with you?

Oh, yes! I took them!

You took them every day to the classroom, or they had their own classes?

In Gold Acres the schoolhouse was just another house that they had out there, and we just walked to there from the house they gave me. The houses were all fairly close together.

In other words, there was a house where you were going to live there by the school, and there was someone to take care of your baby.

Yes, the mine said they would furnish me with a babysitter, they’d pay for a babysitter.

And they did?

And they did. I was devastated when that next baby was coming. I thought, well, my school teaching was all over. But you know, the Lord takes care of things like that! This was just out of the blue sky I got this job.

Fell into your lap.

It just fell into my lap.

Now, fifty miles isn’t so far. Was Hugh able to come and see the children and you?

Not while he was on the railroad. Occasionally, we would go into Beowawe, to his mother's, and he was going through there, and then we'd see him that way.

So that was kind of a separated marriage for so long?

Oh, it was!

How did it affect the children not to see their daddy very much, do you know? Did they miss him?

Not too much. He was, as I said, [chuckles] a cowboy and he was gone a long time with his rodeoing and things like that. He was gone a lot of the time, and I was their mainstay. All three of the children, now at Gold Acres and this was 1945 I went there—were all in school, all three of them.

Now what county is Gold Acres in?

Lander.

It is in Lander?! I haven't had much in interviews on Gold Acres. And how long did you teach at Gold Acres?

I taught there four years. My health wasn't too good at that time, and I decided to take a year of leave and just rest.

Where did you do that?

Then I went to Beowawe. By that time, the war was over and Hugh was home. He was there in Beowawe too at that time. Then he was driving an ore truck out to a mine. It's where the original Battle Mountain Mine is now. But he was hauling iron ore then, from

out there into Beowawe to be taken away on the train.

So you stayed home and took care of your big family?

A year-and-a-half. By that time, our fourth child, Susan, was five years old. And then during my rest period, we were expecting another baby!

Oh my!

So I was out, I guess, about a year-and-a-half. During that year, I applied for the school there at Beowawe and thought maybe I could get that, and I didn't. I felt very deflated. I never had any problems getting schools, so why? But anyway, during the school year, one of the teachers there at Beowawe came and told me, "You know, they need a teacher at Battle Mountain. At mid-term, their teacher in the first grade is getting married, and they need a first-grade teacher. Why don't you put an application and go there?" So I did. I wrote the application, sent it in there, and the principal came out to Beowawe and interviewed me and it wasn't long until I had a school there in Battle Mountain.

Now, tell me which school and what year was that?

That had to be 1950.

And was it the grammar school that's now the courthouse?

Yes, it was. And I taught school in that outside room there, down in the basement.

So you took your children and moved. I want to ask many things about that. Number one,

was it your first visit to Battle Mountain when you went there to teach, or had you been there before?

I had been through there, but I'd never stopped there. I didn't know anything about it.

What did the town look like then? I'm interested, because I'm doing all of Lander County, and that includes Battle Mountain, so I want to get an idea—especially compared to today—of what Battle Mountain was like when you first moved there.

Much like it is now, except in the upper part of town there was nothing. I mean, from the building where Lemaire's Store is now, there was nothing from there on up to the Indian colony.

Oh, amazing! Because that's all town!

That's been built up. Swackhamers had a grocery store on the corner which is now the Owl Club. The post office was on a side street there. And they had a theater there. [chuckles] There was a hardware store—I can't name it right this second—and a bar, and a place to eat. That was all there was down that way—nothing else.

Were the Nevada Club and Owl Club active then? The two big gambling places that are there now?

Yes, they were there at that time. The Nevada Bank of Commerce was right in between there, right on that street there.

Was the train running through then and stopping at a depot at that time?

Yes, it was.

Did you use the train?

No, I didn't, because you see, Hugh was no longer working on it, and I didn't have to go anyplace, because he was home.

Oh, did he come and stay? What did he do?

He came there and worked.

What did he do?

He hauled ore from the mine out, back to the train there in Battle Mountain, on big trucks.

And he drove the trucks?

Uh-huh.

Where did you live when you moved there with your children?

The first place was at the Jurys. They had a big mine there of some kind, and had some cabins there that people lived in. They had one cabin that was empty, and they let us have that one cabin.

But you had so many children, how did you all fit?

I guess we were used to sort of bunching up. We managed alright though. That was for the first year. But for the second year, we were able to rent a house.

Where was that?

It was a Belaustegui [property]. That's an old family there. This wasn't Leon Belaustegui—it was his brother—but he had a house there that he had for rent, and that

had several rooms, and we were comfortable there.

Where was that located, do you remember? What was it close to?

It was close to the school that you mentioned, and it was just kind of down the street and across. We lived there for a while, and then I taught there in Battle Mountain for that half-year and then four more years. Then we moved to another home—I guess it's called Second Street now—close to the Methodist church.

Did all of the children go to that school, or was one moving into junior high by then?

No, our son was going to high school. For one year, he stayed with my husband's sister there in Carlin, and she had three girls, and he went to high school there in Carlin.

Who took care of your baby?

Oh, I had a babysitter. I'm trying to think who that was now.

Did someone come to the house?

No, I took the baby there for the first two years. Then after that, another lady, Loma Schwin, took care of her. Loma was working for Dr. Hyde, who is a long-time doctor there, an old doctor. She was working for them, and she'd come by and pick up the little one and take her to work with her. And she was about three or four years old then.

Take her to work?

Take her to work with her.

Oh, my. It seems like such a busy day, because you had all these children at home, and you were teaching, and surely when you got home you had all those responsibilities of cooking and laundry. How did you handle all of that?

I don't know, everything just fell into place! No problem!

No problem?! [laughs] You had a lot of energy, obviously.

More than I have now, most likely! [laughter]

How long did you live in Battle Mountain, the whole family?

Four-and-a-half years. And during that time, there were young people that I had taught out in Gold Acres. They needed to go to high school, and their parents asked me if they couldn't come and stay with me and go to school there—one at a time! [laughs]

You mean, to board in your house?

Stay with me, and I gave them room and board.

Did you have enough rooms?

Oh yes.

It was a big house?

Pretty good-sized. The first one, their boy, was the older one, and he came and stayed and went to school. And then later on they had two other girls—not at the same time, but one at a time, they came and stayed with me and went to high school there.

I hope you had somebody clean the house?

Oh, I took care of that.

You did it all?! And meals?

Yes.

Tell me a lime bit about life in Battle Mountain at that time. Were the mines thriving, or were they in a slow-down period?

There wasn't really too much mining right then, while I was there. There was some way out in the country. I can't even remember now, the names of the places there, but they were out away from there. The copper mine didn't open up until some time after I had left there; and then the gold mine much later.

What do you estimate the population was when you were there? Do you have any guess?

I wouldn't know. There must have been more than a thousand people.

How many students were in your classroom?

They varied. One year I had thirty-five little ones in the first grade that had never been to kindergarten.

Oh! Is that because there were workers who had their children with them?

The railroad families would come in, and they'd have their children. A time or two, I had a little guy come in there that couldn't speak any English, but we got along fine. I had taken some Spanish in high school, and I'd always enjoyed it, so I knew a few words like "book" and "pencil" and "paper" and things like that—I could speak in Spanish to him and make him

understand what I wanted. But before the year was out, he was getting along very nicely too.

So you had to give individual attention to different children. Was there any other language? Was there Basque language as well as the Spanish language?

These were mostly Mexican people.

On the railroad?

Uh-huh, railroad workers, mostly. I just enjoyed every minute of it, even when I had those thirty-five children there when I was at Gold Acres. I had grades one through eight, and I had taught all those grades. You've got to figure out how you're going to divide your children, and how you're going to use them. Of course the younger ones would always listen to the older ones recite. Sometimes they knew more than the older ones about their own subjects! But anyway, this is a system that I used, there when I had so many children there in Battle Mountain. After a while, you could tell which ones were more advanced than others, and I would use them as a group. And I'd have maybe three different groups.

Sounds like you were a natural teacher! What percentage of the class were the ones who were the working—family children that were sort of "transient," not permanent residents of Battle Mountain—compared to the permanent residents there?

I think most of them were the permanent residents, people who had ranches there and had businesses there. Probably a very small percent of those that would come through. Of course, a lot of those people that did come in to work on the railroad, they stayed for a while, you know, and worked for quite a while.

It wasn't as if they came one year and were gone the next?

No. And a lot of them are still there, I think.

Were there other ethnic children besides the Mexican children? Any other ethnic groups?

Yes, there was a French Basque family that moved in there, and their children weren't speaking too good English. A lovely family! They had three boys. I believe that one of the boys is still in business there in Battle Mountain. Every Christmas the father would give me a big box of chocolates for Christmas—these samplers that I love so much! When my youngest child was in kindergarten there in Battle Mountain, I gave her a birthday party on her birthday, and I had sent an invitation to him, out to their family, for the boys to come in to the party. But the boys didn't come to the party, and later on I saw him and he apologized and apologized. He said, "No get the invitation in time!" But he said, "I want to get your pretty little girl something. I'll get her a pretty little dress." And he did! He got her the cutest little dress. They were such a lovely family!

So what made you, after four years, leave? And where did you go?

I signed my contract to go back, to stay there, and I seemed to be pleasing everybody. The pit boss from out to Gold Acres Mine came in to see me one day, and he said, "We need a teacher out to Gold Acres again. Would you consider coming back?" And I said, "Oh, Bob, I've already signed my contract to come back here to Battle Mountain!" But I had had such a *good* time out there to Gold Acres, I had enjoyed

it so much, and the more I thought about it, I thought, "Well, gee, maybe I ought to go back to Gold Acres." So I went to my school board members and I told them what had happened, and they said, "Well, this is early enough, if you really want to go, I'm sure we can get a replacement for you."

What did Hugh think of that, though? Wasn't he working? Or was he still traveling around?

Oh, he was working where he could get work. But that was a mine, and they wanted him to work too!

Wonderful!

So I bundled the kids up, and we all traveled back to Gold Acres.

Now, how did they feel about that? Especially as they were getting older? Like you said, one was in high school.

The children? Oh, they didn't mind.

They didn't mind? Because some kids start to build friends and don't want to really leave. How many miles is Gold Acres from Battle Mountain?

About fifty miles.

That's not too bad.

Not too far. That was in 1955.

Did they give you housing?

Yes, they furnished my house. If I would go back, they'd give me the same salary I would get in Battle Mountain, but they'd furnish my house and my utilities.

My, that's a much better bargain! You must have been a really good teacher, everyone was calling you everywhere! [laughs] So then you went back, and tell me what kind of a life there was then. You had now, what, four children, or five?

I had five at this time, but our boy was in high school—he was away from home.

He was staying at Carlin?

Yes, going to high school in Carlin. I had the four girls. When I went back, the mine had increased so much—and of course I knew I'd have grades one through eight—I went into that schoolroom, I had twenty-four children, and I thought, "What in the world have I done now?! Why didn't I stay in Battle Mountain with one grade?!" So I muddled along with them. I said, "Well, you made your bed, now sleep in it!" you know. So that fall, though, I did the best I could with all of them. During the fall of the year, a county superintendent came out. They visited the schools like that, they visited us all. She visited me there at the school where I was teaching, and unbeknownst to me, she went to the school board and said, "You've got to get another teacher. What that woman is trying to do would drive anyone out of their mind!" And they said, "We don't have a place to put another teacher." She said, "Then make one, build one." Her name was Kathryn Scribner, and she was a county superintendent. She lived in Lovelock, but she did the schools in Lander County there, and Eureka County too, I believe. And so they got busy. It wasn't long after that a couple came into town. He wanted work at the mine and she was a teacher. It just happened that way! My life has been blessed, I think! Anyway, to begin with, she wanted the upper grades, and I wanted the lower grades.

So we taught together for the first little while in the same room, both of us.

Oh, my! Did that work out?

Well, yes, we made it work. Then they built another room onto the schoolhouse. And then after they built the other room on the schoolhouse, then I moved my first four little grades into the new room. We had an open house there for the population to come see our new room. And during that time, a lady came to me and asked me about starting a Sunday School out there, and I said, "Well, yes, we can start a Sunday School." While I was in Battle Mountain I went to the Methodist church. So the pastor from the Methodist church called us his "little orphan Sunday School" out there, and he would come out on Sundays sometimes, and we had a *wonderful* Sunday School out there. And the teachers were Mormons, Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist—I mean, from every...But we had a *wonderful* Sunday School.

It was an ecumenical...

It really was, and ecumenical [Sunday School].

Were your children there?

My children were right there in Sunday School with us, and all the other children of the school district were there. I did play the piano, so we were able to have music for the children, and singing. I guess I sort of acted as the superintendent and led it all.

When did you start to play piano?

Oh, I took lessons when I was a youngster at home. My mother and father got a piano for my sisters and me.

Did you move your piano around?

No, I didn't take any piano with me, there was just one in the schoolroom.

And you remembered how to play?

Oh yes. And we'd put on Christmas programs and the whole bit, you know.

Oh my! How busy you were! Did Hugh come at all? Oh, he was working there, he lived with you there.

Yes, he was working.

He was working in the mines?

Uh-huh.

What did he do in the mines?

Part of the time he was hauling ore from the open pit mine over to the refinery where they took the gold and made the gold into bricks. Then later on he was their blasting master: he did the blasting. He would set the dynamite and blast. They were up on the hill from where we lived, and everybody would get out to watch that blast. It was beautiful when that blast would go off—it was just all colors of the rainbow.

Like fireworks? [laughs]

It was, it was beautiful.

So this was a good economic time for your family?

Yes.

Probably the first stable time?

Pretty good, yes.

And how long did you stay there at that mine?

Until it closed.

When was that?

In 1961. I went there in 1955.

So you were there six years.

The school principal in Battle Mountain would come out occasionally to visit us—and when they learned that the mine was going to close, he told me that he had no place for the two of us in Battle Mountain that we would be interested in teaching, because they were all filled up. But he said, "I sure need some teachers in Austin. Will you go to Austin?" I need a third- and fourth-grade teacher there, and I need a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher there. Will you go there? I had never been to Austin, but I was always curious about it. I also had a chance to go to Gardnerville, because the principal that had been there before this one had told us when he went to Gardnerville, "If I can do anything for either one of you ladies after you leave this school, let me know." So I had put in an application there, but after they wanted me here, and I didn't even have to make an application...

That was pretty tempting!

He told me, "You can take a school day off and go up there and go visit the school and see if you like it up there." I guess he really needed a teacher badly! [chuckles] Well anyway, I didn't want to come up alone, and so I told this teacher that was teaching with me, "If I go on a Saturday, will you go with me?" And she said yes, she would come up with me.

Was she considering moving here too?

She would if her husband could find work here, but she wouldn't if her husband couldn't find work here.

Could Hugh find work here?

No. There were no mines working here at that time. So I just came anyway. We came on some Saturday. We fixed a picnic lunch and came on up. Our two older daughters were married by that time, and I brought the two younger ones with me up here. Mrs. Oliver, the teacher that I was working with, and I looked the town over, and I inquired about a place to live, should I come.

How many children were still home?

Just the two little girls.

How old were they by then?

Susan and Carolyn. Susan was...Well, while I was teaching in Gold Acres this last time, she was in high school, so I had to pawn her off with her sister in Reno, to go to school. But Carolyn was with me at that time when we came up. She would be in the sixth grade the year I came up. So I found a house to live in. I met two different people. I stopped at the grocery store down here.

Was it Kent's then?

No, it was Vigas. Have you met Joy Brandt?

Yes, I'm interviewing her tomorrow.

Her mother and father had that store, and we stopped there to get our way around a little

bit, find out things. And Madge Bertrand was in there, and I met her. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Vigas, she was the first one I met. But I had forgotten, I didn't know who it was, and not too long ago, she said, 'I was at Vigas' when you came in.' But anyway, she and I became very good friends and very close friends.

Did Hugh come to look it over or did he already know? Or did he just go along wherever you went?

He did. [laughs] Well, he helped me move up here and helped me get settled, and he stayed, you know, until we got organized. Then I don't remember exactly what he was doing. Just messing around, I think!

Is this the house you moved into?

No.

Where did you move?

Do you know where the schoolhouse is?

Yes.

On over, the road turns up and then it goes down that way. There's a little house right there on the corner, and then the next house over, on the same hill—that's the house we lived in. It belonged to a Bill Martin and he rented it to me for fifty dollars a month.

Was that the school that you were going to teach at, right there?

Right there.

So you didn't have to ride down these hills in the snow?

No, I didn't.

Did it seem kind of strange to see these hills and the way the houses were, after other places? Or were you just so used to living in so many different kinds of places?

I just didn't know what to expect when I came here, so I just accepted it as it was.

[laughs] You're an amazing woman! [laughs] What time of year was it, the fall, the start of the school year?

The fall of 1961 I started teaching here. The mine had closed down—they'd run out of ore. Harry Bishop, it was his father that had started the mine to begin with, had told me one time, "You know, there's still ore here, but it is so fine that we have no way of getting it out of the ground and processing it. Someday, someone will come in, and they will take that over." That's what Battle Mountain is doing now.

That's with the gold, with the chemicals, yes.

That's called a stovepipe, and they say it's a rich vein. Of course Harry is long deceased.

He didn't get to see that happen?

No, he didn't, but he told me it would happen.

Isn't that something?!

And his son, Steven Bishop, is our County Sheriff down there. And his daughter, Kathy, is head of the hospital down there. And I had Ben in school in first grade up at Gold Acres. Our two families were very close.

I was asking you what it was like when you came to Austin in 1961, what was the population,

what was the main street, compared to now? It looks like so many places have been closed.

It was a little bit different. I think they figured around three hundred people lived here. Of course there were the ranches, and a lot more people out on the ranches. But the post office was a little building right down main street, probably across from the Chevron Station there. Now they've built the new post office, of course. And the bank was right where the library is now, the First National Bank. And then they built the new post office, then they built the new bank since I've been here. And I've just been here since.

Have there been many changes since then, or were a lot of these places closed down when the mines closed? Has it been like it is now for so many years without anyone taking it over or taking them down?

There have been mines started up, out to Kingston Canyon, and then later on one out here towards Big Creek. But that has been more recent. Then I was here because there was no work here for the other teacher, Mrs. Oliver, there was no work here for her husband, so she went someplace else to teach—she didn't come here. And my husband...I don't know what he was doing! *[laughs]* He was messing around, I guess.

What would kids do in this town for recreation? It's not a place where you can ride a bike. There was no pool at that time. What did they do?

Well, my daughter and another little girl that went to school in her class became very good friends, and they were together quite a bit. They were in the same class, and her folks had the Shell Station down here in

town. They were together quite a lot, but in the wintertime, there was sleigh riding.

Fun winter sports?

Uh-huh.

But these hills, with traffic, seem like kids couldn't play right out here in the streets. It looks like a car could just turn a corner... Where would they go to play in the snow?

Well, mostly in the school yard where there were some places.

And that would be close to home. Did you ever have a chance to have some fun, besides your work? Or was that enough fun that you didn't need recreation?

Well, the teachers would have get-togethers occasionally. We'd always have a Christmas party. We always, of course, had Christmas programs and Easter programs and things like that.

What did you do for relaxation? When you weren't working, and you had a lime time, what would you do?

I can't remember! I don't think I did anything much, I'm afraid I didn't have too much time. But I just enjoyed keeping my house, when I wasn't in the schoolroom.

Did you get to see the children? As they were growing up and weren't here—you said one was one place going to high school, and one went to Reno. What was happening with your children by now?

Our boy, the only boy we have, from high school went right into the Air Force. While he

was going through high school in Carlin, they had a place there in Carlin where they tried to interest the children in Air Force and things like that. About that time the Second World War was coming on and I told him, "Please don't let them induct you into the service: go into the Air Force or choose some form that you want to do. Don't just go into the general Army." And so he went into the Air Force.

He enlisted?

Yes, and went into the Air Force. So that's where he was.

What did he do after he got out of it? Or did he make it a career?

He made it a career. Now he lives in Atwater, California with his family. He married Joyce Swell. That was when he was in the Air Force, and she was too. It was at an air base in Texas where he met her, and they were married. They have three children, who are grown now—two boys and a girl. The older boy went into the Air Force and he was a Captain in the Air Force. He married a girl that he met in California, and they were stationed in Germany.

Now what happened with your daughters?

Well, they were both married.

Did they marry Nevadans? Did they stay in Nevada?

Well, yes, they did, in Reno. I would go to summer school off and on while I was teaching school, and I would take them with me. My oldest sister had a cafe there in Reno, and she had the girls come and work for her there. They would be serving,

and they would be waitresses—both the two older girls. And they met some boys there, Maxine especially. Some young man kept coming there to drink coffee just so he could be there where she was! The older one married a boy there. Well, he was from South Carolina, but his brother was living in Reno and he was here visiting his brother, so they were married.

Are they in Reno, or in South Carolina?

Well, he has passed away.

Where does she live?

She still lives in Reno. She lives there and works for Hamilton's. It's an outfit where they make needles for experiments.

And let's see, that leaves one more girl.

Susan.

Is that your youngest?

She's next-to-the-youngest. She married an Austin boy, Richard Williams, and they have a home up here on the hill. She works over to the school as a teacher's helper. She's been there for about four or five years, maybe longer than that. And in the summertime, she usually works up at the pool as manager of the swimming pool.

Now, is Richard Williams related to Ray Williams [Lander County Commissioner]?

Yes, they're brothers.

Okay, so she's a sister-in-law of Ray.

That's right.

Does she have children?

They have a boy and a girl. The boy works in this gold mine between here and Battle Mountain And the girl graduated. She went to college in Susanville—it was a junior college, I think. Then she went to Davis in California, and she wants to be a veterinarian. She graduated three years ago from Davis, and after she graduated from Davis, she went to work in Coalinga where they race horses.

Is that Nevada?

It's in California: Coalinga, California. And she worked down there for two years, I guess, with a veterinarian they have with the race horses. They raise race horses and train them there. Then they take them to Santa Anita for the race tracks. But she came home last summer, and she managed the pool for her mother. And now she's working at the University of Nevada.

At Reno?

Uh-huh.

And what does she do there?

Well, she's working with the 4-H Club with their animals, because she's still interested in becoming a veterinarian. When she graduated from college and put in an application to become a veterinarian, there were over a thousand young people that wanted to be veterinarians, and they were only accepting about four hundred a year. Last time they called, if they called one more name, they would have called her name. But I'm sure they will this time.

How old is she now?

Twenty-four?

Did she get her love of animals from the family ranching, or just on her own?

She's always loved them. She and another little girl, when they were in grammar school—that little Rose girl that lived out here on one of the dry farms—they each broke a calf to ride. They would ride them in parades!

Now then, that leaves your youngest daughter.

That's Carolyn, and after she graduated from high school, she went to college a year—she and her little friend from down here.

University of Nevada-Reno?

Yes, she went a year there, and then she decided .she didn't want to go back, but she would like to take a business course. So then she went to the business college there in Reno for a year. Then when she came home, she worked as an aide there in the Sheriff's Office. She worked there for two years or longer. And then they needed somebody in the courthouse, so she went to the courthouse and she worked there in the Recorder's Office. And she married an Austin boy, and lives right down the street here in that log house.

Is she still working at the courthouse?

No, she doesn't work now. Well, she tries not to work, but the lady that works in the courthouse now that is there, when she has to take time off, she calls Carolyn to come work for her. And if they need help over to the school, they call her over there to the school.

As a substitute. Does she have a family?

She has two girls. There they are. [shows picture] There's Jolene on that far side, and this is Laurie.

Beautiful beautiful children.

Jolene graduated from high school a year ago, and she's going to junior college in Elko now—this past year. And Laurie is second year high school this year.

Now, let's get back to your teaching: How long did you teach here in Austin?

Thirteen years. Then the school board came to me and they told me, "You're at the age of sixty-five, it's time for you to retire." And I said, "I'm not ready to retire!" [laughter] And they said, "Well, we don't think you are either, but that's the age we ask you to retire." Then they said, "Well, we think that you're not ready to retire either, so maybe we'll give you another year." So they gave me another year. And so it was 1974 when I retired. That was thirteen years I taught here.

And you weren't even eager to retire!

No, I substituted for the next eight years. They kept me busy!

Oh, my, incredible!

I had signed up for my retirement, and I was getting that. But when I first started, my salary wasn't like what it is now. It's up into a thousand dollars a month. I was just beginning to get that thousand dollars a month when I retired. So when my retirement came, I was getting seven hundred a dollars a month from my retirement. I had to pay into that, started it when I was teaching out in Washoe Valley. But my first retirement check

was seven hundred dollars a month, and of course I'd get a one percent increment each year. But I was only getting about forty dollars a month for substituting.

For a day?

Uh-huh, every time I substituted. So then by the time the younger teachers started retiring, they were giving them a two percent increment, and we older ones were only getting the one percent, and so the classroom teachers went to bat for us.

Oh, good.

And so now they gave us the two percent, and they had to give it from way back when.

Oh, retroactive?

Uh-huh. And so then I get a nice retirement now.

When did you move to this house?

I've been in Austin for thirty-one years, and there were thirteen years over there. I lived in the house over there for four years, and then I was looking for some property. I thought, well, rather than pay rent, I should buy something. And I came over and looked at this house and the house that Ray Williams lives in. I was able to buy this property with twelve lots for thirty-five hundred dollars.

With twelve lots?! You mean, there wasn't anyplace around? It was empty? It was all open space?

Yes.

What a wise move you made!

We went to the bank and I paid by the month. There was an old family living here, a real old family, and their son—the mother and father had both passed away. I knew them when I was living someplace else. The mother had been a teacher, and she had taught out in the valley somewhere. This picture up here on the wall, she had it taken from the poem, "When Day is Done." It was here in the house, and she just left it. But that was written on the back of it, that's why I knew. And so we got in touch with her son, who was in California, and he came up and we made the deal. But neither house was livable. I mean, we had a lot of work to do.

Who did the work?

Well, my husband came up and he did the work.

Good. Was he capable of doing that?

Oh yes. Well, you see, when I was going to summer school in Reno, he would be there, and he worked with whatever he could find. They were building those housing projects, and he would work with them. He knew all about the building, how it should be done, and about the electrical work, and about the plumbing. I had a brother-in-law who was a plumber, and he used to work with him occasionally. But we had to take care of all of that.

How long did it take to make it livable?

Well, after school was out, we took that house over there because it didn't need so much work on it. And all summer I worked on that house.

Was that your house too?

It was. And I worked all summer on that house. Then he came up and helped. Of course, it had to have work done on the sewer system and all that, and he did that. We lived there for a year, I guess, but I always had my eye on this house. I always thought I wanted a brick house. And so we came over here and started working on this.

So you kept busy after retirement getting the houses in order.

Well, I was still...

You were still teaching? substituting?

Yes, I was still teaching. But over the summertime we kept working on it. This part of the house here, there had been a fire in it. I told my husband, "I think you could use that for your tool room if you want to, and I'll fix the kitchen in here." Then my sister was here from Idaho one time, and she told Hugh, "You know, that would make a nice kitchen for Essie. Why don't you make a kitchen out there?" And he started working on that.

A very nice kitchen! So you knew when you bought the property that this was going to be your last stop?

My husband hopes it won't be my last stop. He hates it up here. Of course, all my friends are here. I mean, for thirty years.

Well sure, you've built a life. And you've moved around so much.

I feel like I sort of belong here. But he says, "Well, we're getting older, we need to be downtown, closer to doctors. We never know when we're going to have to see a doctor."

What do you do when you have to see a doctor? Are there any in Austin?

No. There's a lady that comes here from Eureka, Wednesdays.

Well, that's just once a week. What if you're sick at night, what do you do?

If you get sick, it's not usually on Wednesday! But I've had some problems. I had to have a cataract removed in this eye. It didn't heal. It got infection in it, and I had to go to San Francisco and have surgery. And of course I lost the sight of the eye.

Did you?! Oh!

This is an eye shell [a covering for the part of the eye that was left after surgery] I have.

Oh, my!

Hugh had to take me in to Reno to the doctor to see what was wrong. I knew something was wrong with it, but I didn't know what. That's when they sent me to San Francisco for surgery.

Maybe if you had been closer to doctors, you mean, you wouldn't have had the infection?

Maybe. I don't know. I think that had been coming on for some time.

Where do you have to go when you want to see a doctor?

Well, I have gone to Eureka—they have a nice clinic over there.

How far is that? How many miles?

About 72 miles. I think the sign is at the bottom of the hill here. It says 72 miles. But Battle Mountain is 90. Fallon is 112, and Reno is 65 miles beyond that. I know that my daughter that you met, she says, "I want you and dad to move down here. We can take care of you." I said, "You don't have to take care of us! We can take care of ourselves!"

You're too independent!

And she said, "Yes, but I can look in on you." But I do have two girls here.

Yeah, that's wonderful. Is there anything more about your life here in Austin that you want to tell us before we end the interview? Are there any other activities you got involved in, here in Austin, that you want to tell us about before we end the interview?

Well I had always wanted a church to go to, and I've always had a church to go to, and when I came here, the only two churches there were, were the Catholic church and the Episcopal church. And the Episcopal church had a sign out that said, "Community Episcopal Church," and I thought, "Well, that must be mine." So I started going there. Madge Bertrand was with me. We went there. We started a Sunday School. We had all of these young people that are fathers now, and mothers. Then later on I became a lay reader there.

What is a lay reader?

A lay reader is a person that can take over for the pastor—if there happens to be a pastor—or they can take over without a pastor, if there isn't one.

What are the requirements to become a lay reader, if any?

The Episcopal Church was the Church I had never been interested in. We had to take a course in learning all about the Church and what it means, the different areas of it, the definitions and all.

Where did you take those courses?

Right down here. There was a couple that moved in—Herman and Jo Buck—and he was our pastor here, and he was very good. We took a course under him: Madge and I both did. So then we became lay readers, from learning all about the church. Of course, the Episcopal Church has a prayer book, and you had to learn how to use that prayer book. So now, I can have a complete service, which I do have. There are two other ladies—they are both ordained ministers now: Madge [Bertrand] and Estelle Shanks.

They're ordained, so they can do more than you can?

Yes, and we can have communion when they have [the service]. But they insist on me taking my turn, so one Sunday Madge will do it, another Sunday, Estelle, and the next Sunday, I have to do it.

Who does it the fourth Sunday?

Well, we start all over again. And so then what I do is, have the entire service from the prayer book, and then I have to have read the scriptures that we have, and talk about it.

Do you wear any special garb?

We did when Herman was here—he insisted on it. So we both had the robes and all. But not now. Madge and Estelle, of course, do, but I don't.

Now tell me how many usually attend your services.

I'm afraid it's a very few.

Like...

My daughter Carolyn was confirmed there, and baptized there. Of course she was just small. There were other people that have been here that have left. So seven or eight, sometimes ten or twelve.

Well, it's a small town, and there are several churches here.

There are now. And I probably never would have been an Episcopalian had some of these other churches been here, because I wasn't familiar at all with the Episcopal Church. But I love it now, and I'm glad.

Now, is there anything else that we haven't covered about Lander County? I did notice that there is a fairly new little park and recreation center with a pool, with playgrounds, with a place for tennis and basketball, and so now kids have a place that your kids didn't have. Tell me about how that development came about, and when.

I don't really know how it came about, I really don't. It just happened I think! [laughter] I guess people from Austin just got busy and decided that's what they wanted. Of course you know Battle Mountain and Austin are the only two towns, actually, that have taxes [chuckles] to do anything here. And Battle Mountain

seems to resent everything that Austin does. Now maybe I shouldn't say that!

You've lived in both towns, so you don't have [any prejudice].

We've needed a new school for so long, because this one where I taught, the stairwells are so narrow, and they've had trouble with their heating system there. We wonder sometimes, if there was ever a fire, would those children ever get out, if they get crowded in that stairwell.

Did you get a new school?

Yes, they built it out there on the Battle Mountain Highway. They moved several of the buildings down there. The Forest [Service] is down there, and so is the State Highway Department, and then the new school.

And when was the recreation area/park developed? Do you know how many years ago?

You know, the time goes by so fast, I'm wondering if I'm right, but I will say...Oh, maybe ten years.

Oh, that long?

I don't know if it was or not. But you know, when you get older, time goes by so fast.

I know there's the baseball field. Are there a lot of games that are played there on the baseball field?

No, I think groups will go up there sometimes. I know the Baptist church up here, they take a bunch of young people lots of times and have picnics up there. And they play baseball.

Not from the school teams?

The school sometimes, for their physical ed., like in the fall of the year when the pool is still open, they'll take them up and let them swim. Or they'll go up there and let them have ball games and things like that.

Does the pool get busy in the summer?

Quite busy. It stays pretty busy.

And I know you have a nice little senior center here.

Where it is now is quite new. We've only had that for about five years. The first senior center used to be the old firehouse. It's down just across from the International on this side. We were there for several years. Of course that started while I was still teaching, and I didn't go there for a while, and I don't remember what year I started going there. It was after I retired, I know, and wasn't substituting quite so much. And then they built the new senior center up here where it is now.

It seems like an important place for people to come, not just for the meal, but a place to go for a little sociability.

You know, there are so many people that could come here, that won't—the elderly. They say they think it's for charity, but it isn't. And it's like I told my children, "I don't go down there just to get something to eat when I go for lunch. I go down there to visit with the other ladies and the other people there. You know, we get a lot of good laughs down there."

Yes, that's important. One other thing before we close the interview. I know in my research—because I've done a lot of research on the

county—there's a very touchy, controversial subject of the moving of the county seat from Austin to Battle Mountain. Tell me a little bit about it from your perspective. You've been a woman who's been in many, many places, and I know it's always hard for anyone to be objective, but tell me a little bit about it from your point of view, about the "battle" of the change to Battle Mountain.

Well, that's an awfully sore spot of the people of Austin. We voted here and they voted down there. Of course, there were so many more there, that they outvoted us to have it moved there. I know the courthouse was very busy down here—at least when my daughter was working there, and all the rest of them. They had to move all of the records and everything. And I think they left some of the records. I think at that time the Sheriff's Office was in part of the courthouse, I believe. Now, I might be wrong there. They used to keep some of the prisoners in a part of it, you know, when they'd have prisoners.

Here at the courthouse?

Uh-huh. Now, somebody might say I'm wrong, and I might be wrong, I just don't know about that. After Battle Mountain did move the courthouse down there, they took that school that I first taught in, which was nice, and they condemned that for a school, and started building new schools down there. And of course we people here at Austin had to pay taxes for that. And they took that building [the old schoolhouse] there, and put the courthouse in it! The precious county records, in that condemned building!

They didn't fix the building up after it was condemned to put it up to standard?

I don't know what they ye really done there. But anyway, then they brought in those metal buildings, those quonset huts for part of it too. But when we had this nice courthouse here, and they had to do all that, we were just a little bit unhappy up here.

That's understandable.

Whenever there would be a trial, or anything like that, they'd have to come up here. And of course there'd be a lot more traffic on the streets when they would come up here. And then, of course, the people that were working in the courthouse, threw them out of work.

Were some able to transfer to Battle Mountain?

No. Well, Battle Mountain wanted to put their people to work.

They didn't give them an option, as county workers?

I don't know whether they really did or not. But anyway, we still have one office up here, where we can go and get licenses for our cars and things. They have one lady who works there—that's my son-in-law's sister, Mary Lou Woods.

And the judge is here, Madge's husband, Frank Bertrand.

Uh-huh, we have a judge here. Of course, they do there in Battle Mountain too, you know. They come here occasionally for some business. But after the courthouse closed, after they took the courthouse, then the bank left us. We didn't have a bank here any more. So there were a few years that we didn't have a bank.

Before we close, what do you think the prospect of Austin's future is, without an economy now?

I don't know. I really don't know. It'll always be here, because there's so many old-timers here—people who have been here for years and years.

But what about when the old-timers are gone? Will the second generation stay?

Some of them won't, no. Of course the ranches are around, and they'll probably want someplace to get gas and buy groceries and things like that. Of course, since Round Mountain is working...

Oh, they've got a mine?

Uh-huh, there's a mine there. And there's a nice grocery store out there, and it's much more reasonable!

Where's that?

It's called Hadley's, and it's in the housing for the mine of Round Mountain.

How far away is that? About how many miles?

Well, it's more than fifty miles, I think.

Oh, that far?

It's quite a ways, uh-huh. They have a grocery store. Even people from here in Austin will go out there, because they can get groceries and gas much cheaper than they can here.

Yes, the gas here is very high.

But Joe Ramis now has his gas down to a reasonable amount—but the other two are terrible.

So do you think that your family will stay here? Your daughters and their families?

I am sure that the girls will, as long as their husbands are here, because my sons-in-law were both born and raised here. This has some kind of a magical attachment to people like that. They don't want to leave. I know that Susan's husband, Richard Williams, has had a chance to go other places to work, and he won't. He just stays here.

Beautiful surrounding area.

There's recreation around here. You know, Big Creek for fishing and camping, and also Kingston Canyon.

On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for sharing your life of adventure and strength with us. I'm sure the people here are thrilled that you wound up in Austin. I've heard so many comments about what a wonderful teacher you were. It's been my pleasure to get to know you. This is the end of the interview.

ESSIE ELIZABETH STRICKLAND
PHOTOGRAPHS



ESSIE STRICKLAND, MAY 10, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Madge Bertrand and Essie Strickland, May 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

ESSIE ELIZABETH STRICKLAND

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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Essie Elizabeth Strickland

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BRUCE SWACKHAMER**PREFACE**

Bruce Swackhamer lived all his life in Nevada, where he was born in 1913. A soft-spoken modest man, Mr. Swackhamer responded to questions with a minimum of words. Bruce's father, born in Missouri, came to Tenabo, Nevada from Colorado where he was engaged in mining. Bruce's mother, May Delaney, a schoolteacher from Pennsylvania, came out to Hilltop Mining Camp, close to Tenabo, to teach. When they met and married, Mr. Swackhamer established the only general merchandise store at Hilltop, a very active mining camp.

Bruce, the first of six children, lived at Hilltop until he was a teenager. The family moved to Battle Mountain in 1923 where his dad bought out an existing store and continued to expand and run it.

After high school, caught in the Depression, Bruce would occasionally find work in one of the mines, and started prospecting and leasing some ground near Hilltop and Copper Canyon, which proved successful. During

long periods of unemployment, he worked in his father's store, eventually running it full time.

The Swackhamer's charming home was originally built at the Gold Creek Ranch near Golconda. They purchased it from the owner in 1952 and had it moved to Battle Mountain. Bruce describes that procedure, which was common then, in that region.

An avid photographer specializing in aerial photographs of Battle Mountain, Copper Canyon and Natomas, Bruce has accumulated an extensive collection of historic photographs and negatives starting in 1940. He has shared these graciously with the Lander County Project.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Bruce Swackhamer at his home, at 382 Humboldt Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on March 15, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Swackhamer. Can you give us your name and tell us where and when you were born.

Bruce Swackhamer: My name is Edward Bruce Swackhamer. I was born in Winnemucca, Nevada, July 10, 1913.

Now could you please tell me about your parents, where they came from, and what brought them to Nevada?

My father was born in Missouri, and he came to Nevada from Colorado where he was engaged in mining. He came to Nevada and continued to engage in mining.

Where did he first come when he came to Nevada? What part of Nevada?

Tenabo. It's in Lander County, about twenty-five miles from Battle Mountain.

Did he come because there was already a mining job, or did he come to look around?

He was sent in a mining company in Colorado to do some sampling.

So he was already working for a mining company?

Yes.

Did he come alone, or was he already mated?

No, he mated here in Battle Mountain.

And can you tell me about your mother, where she came from and what brought her? Did he meet her here in Nevada?

Yes, he met her [May Delaney] in Nevada. She came from Pennsylvania. She was a schoolteacher, and she came out here for employment.

Alone, or with her family?

Alone.

And can you tell me how they met and when they married?

She was teaching in Hilltop, and he was working in Tenabo, which is just over the hill from Hilltop. He met her there.

Did they establish a home in Hilltop?

Yes. About the time that they got married, he started a general merchandise store in Hilltop.

Beside mining? or did he stop mining?

He stopped mining.

Tell me about that general merchandise store.

Well, Hilltop was a very active mining camp, and he saw an opportunity to start a store, so he did, and it was successful.

Was it for supplies for the miners and the families?

And the families, right.

What were some of the things that were sold in that store?

Groceries and some clothing, some mining supplies.

What was the name of the store?

"E.O. Swackhamer."

Did your mother continue teaching, or did teachers have to stop when they married?

No, she did not continue to teach, except on an emergency basis.

Tell me when the children started in the family: were you the first?

I was the first.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Yes, there were six of us.

Six of you! Were you all born in Hilltop?

No, just the first three.

How old were you when you left Hilltop?

Probably thirteen years, fourteen years.

Oh! Okay, can you go back in your memory and tell me what you remember about your life and your family's life in Hilltop?

Well, it was just like any family. We got along well and lived well and did the limited things that were available for entertainment and so forth.

Children's lives are so different today that a child today, listening to how your life was, it would be quite different. Can you tell me when you started school, from the time you can remember, what was a typical school day? And

also, in your home life, what kind of chores did you have to do? First let's start with the school. What can you first remember? Like how did you travel to school? What were the kinds of days that school days were like in that early period?

Well, we walked to school. It was a distance of about a half a mile. The schoolhouse was down the canyon from where we lived. As my memory serves me, I imagine it was just a nine to four school. We walked home to lunch.

Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

One-room schoolhouse.

With one teacher for all classes?

Right.

Can you remember the kinds of subjects that you studied?

Well, I imagine that it was just reading and arithmetic and spelling. Those are the only things that I can remember.

And since your mother was a teacher, was she able to give you some pre-training when you were young, or help you with school?

I don't remember that.

What kind of chores did you have to do? Did you help in the store or around the house?

Well my only chore that I can remember, I was supposed to bring in the wood and coal at the evening to start the fire the next morning. But that's the only chore I remember.

How big a town was Hilltop when you lived there? Do you have a recollection of that?

Well, the mine employed a hundred and twenty-five men at it's peak. Most of the employees were single men. So the population wasn't much over that.

It was a mining town?

Oh yes, that's all.

I see. So it was more single men than families then?

Oh yes.

What kind of housing did they have for these miners?

Boarding house.

In other words, families took them in?

No.

Or established boarding houses?

They were just boarding houses for the men.

Can you describe them? since a lot of people don't know what boarding houses at mining towns are like.

Well, they had bedrooms and a dining room, and the men just lived there.

And had their meals and went to work from there?

Right.

Did your family take in any boarders?

No.

Now, when did your family leave Hilltop and where did they go?

We left Hilltop in 1923 and moved to Battle Mountain where my dad bought out an existing store and continued to run it—general merchandise store.

Who owned that store that he bought out, do you remember?

His name was Doc Harris.

Was Doc just a nickname?

Well, I think he was a pharmacist.

How old were you when you moved here?

Moved here in 1923, so I was about eleven years old.

Tell me what you can remember... When you first moved to Battle Mountain, what was it like, and what did you live in? Did you get a house, or did you live over the store?

We lived behind the store, yes. It was attached, an apartment behind the store?

Where was that store located in Battle Mountain?

On the corner of Second and Reese Street.

You said more children came along in the family: some were born in Hilltop and some were born in Battle Mountain.

Three were born in Hilltop, and the rest of them were born in Battle Mountain.

Tell me the names of your brothers and sisters, starting with the oldest down to the youngest.

William was the next one after me. Then Harriet. Then a Natalie, who died from diphtheria. Then they were all born in Hilltop. Then we moved to Battle Mountain: a set of twins, Dick and Leah. And then the last one was Paul.

Were there doctors then, or midwives? How did families handle having these big families?

There were doctors.

When your father started the store here, tell me a little about how business was here and the type of store that developed.

Well I don't know how business was here, because I was just eleven, twelve, thirteen years old, so I don't know.

When you began to know how it developed—because it became a much larger store than Hilltop, right?

Yes.

More supplies. Did you ever work in the store as you got older?

Yes, delivery boy.

Okay, they delivered to the different homes?

Oh yes.

What are your earliest recollections of the kind of town Battle Mountain was as you were going through your teen years?

Well, it always seemed like there was plenty of things to do, if you wanted to do them, and we did.

Like what?

Played ball and...I would say that was the chief thing.

Baseball?

Baseball and basketball.

And did you get into the sports of hunting and fishing?

Oh yes.

Tell me when you started those.

Well, my dad was an avid hunter and I went out with him until I got old enough to go by myself

And what did you hunt?

Well in those days, there was the sage hen and ducks.

What is a sage hen?

They call them sage grouse. It's a game bird. They're very good to eat.

Tell me about the schools here in Battle Mountain. When you came at eleven, you were just finishing elementary and soon moving into junior high. What were your school days and classrooms like? You no longer were in a one-room school.

Let's see, when I came to Battle Mountain, I think I was in the sixth grade. There were just

six school rooms, so evidently there were two classes in one room. But I don't recall being in any room that just had two classes.

About how many students would be in a classroom?

Oh, twelve to twenty.

We're used to thirty or forty in our schools. Do you remember any teachers specifically that you found influenced you or that you found especially helpful in your education?

Oh we had some wonderful teachers. Alice Rose: I think that she taught the fifth and sixth grades. And Mabel Miles was a really dedicated teacher. And there were more of them—I don't recall them right now.

Did you have a lot of homework as you were going to school, do you recall?

I brought a lot home—I don't know how much I did!

When you were going into junior high and high school, what special interests and areas of interest did you start to develop?

We went through the elementary, first through the eighth grade, and then we went to high school. And then in high school it was a different type of school room. Instead of one room, you went to various rooms to various teachers. Reading was the only thing that I was really interested in. I didn't like math. Well, I liked history.

What did you say you liked?

Reading and history.

Any special areas of reading or subject matters?

No, I read everything.

Okay, then start to tell me about when you were finishing high school—what did you do after high school?

Looked for a job.

Tell me what you did?

Well, let's see, I graduated from high school I think in 1936 or something like that. The economy was very, very poor. There was very, very little work going on. There were no major mines going, and it was very difficult for young people to get a job. But I used to rustle around and find a job once in a while. I recall one time a mining engineer came out to Izzenhood. There is a tin deposit out there, low grade. But he was sent out to explore it or develop it, and I worked for him. We sank a shaft.

How far is that from Battle Mountain?

About fifteen miles.

How did you get there?

Drove every morning.

You had a car by then?

No, we went in the mining man's car.

How many worked there?

Just two of us, and him.

How old were you then?

Oh, I imagine I was sixteen, seventeen.

Young! Did you take to that? Did you like that kind of work?

Oh yes! Yeah, sure.

How long did you work with him? What happened after that?

That was just probably a month's job. Then I would keep an eye open, get a job here and a job there—mostly in mining.

I read in some of the notes that I was researching that almost 85 percent of the high school boys worked at some point for Jenkins, who owned all the ranches. Did you ever work for Jenkins on the ranches?

No.

Did you know friends or classmates who did?

Oh sure!

So then when did you start working in the mines full-time? Or did you do other things along with it? Tell me about the development of your work.

Well, there were long periods of unemployment.

Did you work in your father's store when you weren't working?

Uh-huh. Then I started to lease. See, in those days, this area was depressed. I think it was probably the [time of] Great Depression, and this area was quite depressed. The mines were not operating on a full scale. So I was

able to get a lease on a block of ground at these mines. Myself and a fellow by the name of Leon Belaustegui got a lease on a block at the Betty O'Neal mine. We got out a shipment that was pretty good. And then we got a lease on some ground in Hilltop and we got out a shipment there that paid off pretty good.

Let's go back a little bit, because I don't know, and a lot of people who will be reading or listening to your interview don't know much about mining. What kind of mining, what did you do at these mines, and what were you mining?

The Betty O'Neal was a silver mine, and we mined silver ore. We luckily ran into a little stope that had good grade ore in it. We mined it out and shipped it to the smelter.

How many of you worked there?

Two of us.

Just the two of you! So your early experience taught you how to do this—your early work with the mines. Or how did you know how to do the mining of the silver ore?

Well, you just did it.

You just did it, okay.

Then there'd be periods where I couldn't find anything, and I got a lease in Hilltop from a man that owned some claims up there, by the name of Jack McGovern. This same partner, Leon Belaustegui, and I—we got out a small shipment there that kept us going for a while.

How old were you when you were doing these mines?

Probably seventeen to twenty.

So young when you were doing that! You don't hear today of young fellows that young doing the kinds of things you were doing.

I guess not.

So then from there?

And then, with another partner, we got a lease on a property close to Copper Canyon, and we got out a shipment of ore there that was pretty good.

Now, when you got leases, did you need money to put up for it? Or how did you get leases for these mines?

Actually, I don't think in any case did we ever have any legal papers. It was an agreement that we would, if we were fortunate enough to make a shipment, it would go to the smelter, when it came back, the owner would get 10 percent.

Oh, I see. Where was your last lease?

Our last lease was in the Copper Canyon district.

How long did you work out at Copper Canyon?

It wasn't in the Copper Canyon, it was close to the Copper Canyon. When Battle Mountain Gold was mining this mine that we got our ore out of, it was completely gone. They just mined it.

Had taken all the gold out?

They took the whole top of the mountain off.

Oh my gosh! Oh my! So then what did you do? [pause] What year is this by now? You were about twenty, so this was in the forties?

Should be in the forties, yes.

And then what was your next step? Were you still single?

Yes.

And what else?

Well, we leased round and weren't very successful.

You still were with the same partner?

No.

Who were you working with then?

The last one was a fellow by the name of Myron Clark. He was the son of Dr. Clark—the only doctor in Battle Mountain for years.

Now was World War II starting yet, or is this before?

Oh no, this is before.

Okay, what was happening in the town of Battle Mountain by then? Still quiet? Still depressed?

Yes.

Do you know what the population approximately was in that period in Battle Mountain?

No, I don't.

Then did you continue in mining, or did you go on to other things?

Well...These mining ventures, you know, none of them lasted very long. Then there would be periods I would be looking for something else to do and so forth.

Or delivering groceries?

I worked in the store, yes.

There weren't many changes in Battle Mountain then, no people coming in. New residents? Was it kind of a quiet period?

It was a quiet period. People would come in for one reason or another. I remember one couple that came in, they were sent out by the owner of a mine in Copper Basin, as watchmen. For one reason or another, somebody would come in. There was a period there when the Dahl Placers...And it's a big deposit. It was mined by the Natomas Company. They had a dredge...

Where were they from, that company? Do you know where they came from?

It's a big international company. They had operations all over the world. They had a dredge out there and they operated for quite a few years.

Did that bring new people from that company into Battle Mountain?

Just the engineers and so forth that were sent in. A man by the name of Henry Dorian was their engineer. He subsequently bought the Nevada Hotel, and is operating it yet. Or no, I guess his son is operating it yet.

Did you work for them?

No. This Belaustegui that I mentioned and I got a lease and we did some placer mining.

Where?

At this Dahl Placer. We weren't very successful, so we went to work for a couple of fellows who had a better piece of ground on the same Dahl Placer. And we worked for them one summer.

Were you still in your twenties?

Uh-huh.

You were still young. And how long did that activity go on with that company, where some of the engineers came?

Natomas? I really don't know. Several years.

Did that pick up the economy a little bit here?

To a certain extent, yes.

Did they hire many locals?

Not many. They didn't have a big crew.

I see. Did they bring the crew with them?

I don't think so.

So they hired some locals?

Oh yes.

When the war was starting in the mid-forties, did that bring certain changes to this region?

Yeah.

Tell me what it was like. Some of the fellows, of course, got drafted, or enlisted.

Yes, quite a few of the young men enlisted or were drafted. By that time I was working for the state. I was an inspector for the tax commission.

Was that in Battle Mountain?

No. I was living in... Well, let's see, I guess it was in Sparks.

So you moved down to Sparks?

Yes.

Were you still single?

No, I was married. I was just trying to think when this happened, or when I got married. I can't remember.

Let's back up a little bit. Where did you meet your wife?

She was a Battle Mountain girl.

And when did you start going together seriously, and when did you get married?

You'd better interview her!

[laughs] So she went with you to Sparks?

Yes.

How long did you live in Sparks?

I mink about two years.

Tell me a little bit about what that was like. Did you rent a place? What was Sparks like?

Well, we rented a place.

When two years were up, what did you do then? You said you were in Sparks two years.

Yeah, something like that. Then the war started, the United States got into the war. That was in 1941. I stayed in Sparks probably for two or three more months. Then I got a telephone call from my brother.

Which brother?

Bill, who was operating the store at that time. And he called up and he said, "I'm enlisting, and I don't think Dad can run the store by himself. So it's up to you." So I resigned from the Tax Commission and moved back to Battle Mountain.

Oh, I see. And were you then in charge of the store?

Yes.

Did you come back and live in the store housing or get a house?

No, we rented a house.

So then tell me what the store was like. Did you start to get more people in Battle Mountain? Did it get busier? Tell me a little about what a day's activities were like.

Well, a day's activity: We got up in the morning, ate breakfast and went to the store. At that time we had one employee. At noon he went to lunch, and when he came back, I went to lunch. And we closed at six o'clock, which was a break in the tradition of my father, who used to keep the store open until eight.

Who ordered supplies, and where did you get your supplies from?

I did the ordering, and they were delivered out of Reno. They came by railroad freight.

That's right, because the railroad lines were here. What were some of the most popular things that were sold in the store?

Well, this was a grocery store.

Just groceries? or did you have other supplies too?

We had a paint department. It was quite successful, because it was the only one in town. It was a nice operation, we did well.

What were your activities outside of the store? Tell me about some of the things you would do on your time off with your wife or yourself, or organizations. What was your life like?

Well we used to run the store six days a week, but on Sundays we would go on picnics or we'd entertain ourselves.

With friends? with family?

Friends and family.

Did you have any children yet?

Yes, at that time I had two.

Tell me their names and, when they were born.

This first child was Penelope, and she was born in Reno.

She was born in Reno? Because you were living there?

That's when we were still living in Sparks.

Oh, okay.

And then the next one was born in Winnemucca. Her name was Camille.

What were you doing in Winnemucca?

Bringing her down to be delivered.

Oh, there was no hospital here at that time?

Well, the facility was better, and it just made us more comfortable.

Do you remember what year she was born?

No.

We'll get that from your wife. Did you go hunting? Did you fish? Still continue with the sports?

Oh yes.

Was there any major weather disaster or anything else that affected the town in that period? Any major storms?

We had one severe winter. I can't remember what year it was, but during that time, roughly, there was one severe winter—approximately like the winter we just went through.

Did you belong to any organizations? I notice that there are lots of organizations that started in Battle Mountain.

I belonged to the Lions Club for quite a while, while I was in business. And I really think that that's the only one that I was involved in.

I know in the last decade, the gold mining started again. What can you tell me about the start of that activity, and how it brought the economy up a little bit here? What can you tell me about that?

Well, when the price of gold rose, there were good mines that had ore that became valuable enough to start to mine when the price went up.

Who came in then? Do you know what companies came in and where they came from to start the gold mining again?

Well, Copper Canyon was a gold mining company, despite its name. I think they were bought out by a company which is now called Battle Mountain Gold. They started with large equipment and were able to handle a lower-grade ore, and they operated for a long time. They're still operating. Then other mines started. The Cortez, which is in Lander County, and Echo Bay that's out here about twenty-five miles—and they are very, very large operators.

Where do the workers come from for the mining operations?

Well, I don't know. Some of them are experienced miners and they come in because where they've been working is mined out. Lots of them gain on-the-job experience.

When these mines started, did local Battle Mountain people also get involved with the work, or was it mainly people coming from other places?

Well, anybody who wanted to work or maybe improve their employment situation would go to work in the mines here.

When the miners started to come in when the gold mining started, did many of them move here, or were they transient?

Many of them moved and settled.

When these people come into Battle Mountain, how do the local people react to new people coming in? Do these people blend and become a part of the community? Or are they kind of a separate community?

No, with very, very few exceptions, they just become part of the community.

I've noticed that there are Spanish-speaking people here. What brought them to this region, being far from the Mexican border, and maybe they're not from Mexico?

Well, there are lots of Mexican people here.

What brought them here?

Employment.

What kind of employment?

Well, some of them worked in the mines and some of them worked on the ranches.

And then stayed here, herd about it, migrated up north?

Yeah, and brought their families.

I see. Did some come from the agricultural areas in the Sacramento region, do you know? Or just came up from Mexico?

I don't know.

I understand your wife is Basque and there was a very early immigration of Basques to this region. Do you know what brought them here?

The sheep industry. This used to be a big, big sheep country. The operators of these companies would help Basque come, because they are good shepherders.

Did they advertise back over at Basque country and let them know there was work here?

Yes, employment.

I see. So the first ones came to work for companies like Jenkins?

Yes.

Can you tell me anything more about that industry? Were they here before you moved here, or did they come when you were here?

The sheep industry started after I was here. There were two companies one of them was the Jenkins Company, and the other one was Allied—I think they called it Allied Land and Livestock. Then smaller companies started: Calcasorta. And John Belaustegui was quite a large sheep operator. He was my father-in-law. They had some terribly, terribly tough times severe winters...I mean, not every winter, but an occasional severe winter—they would lose lots of sheep. Then sometimes the prices of wool and the price of lamb was so low that it was amazing if they could stay in business, which they did, and they did very well.

I'll need to interview your wife about some of that.

Yes.

I've been reading newspaper accounts dated 1979 to 1980 about the controversy of moving the county seat from Austin to Battle Mountain. Of course Austin was unhappy. Tell me a little bit about being here through that period, what it was like and how moving the county seat here then affected Battle Mountain.

Well, the county seat in Austin was like the tail wagging the dog. Their tax base was so low that it just wasn't economical. I think that there were three major drives to move the county seat. I think the third one was successful. It made good economic sense.

Did the moving of the county seat here then increase the population for people moving from Austin to continue jobs, or did they hire new people here?

Well see, the county government is elected. And the elected people that were in office just didn't run if they were from Austin.

Oh, I see. Did it increase the rivalry or the feelings between the two towns?

Oh, I think that that bitterness is over. But it was a very emotional period there.

Now I notice the Courthouse Building is a pretty old building. What was that building before it became the courthouse?

That building was the elementary school.

Really?! Oh!

It was erected in 1916. I remember that figure because it's on the cornerstone. It was vacant when the county seat was moved to Battle Mountain, so they just moved it in

there. And I think that it looks like—in my opinion—it looks more like a courthouse than it does a school.

Yes, it certainly does. I thought that's what it was. And before I knew the county seat moved here so late, I thought the government was here for a long time. That brings a lot of prestige to Battle Mountain, doesn't it, to be the county seat?

Well I don't think the county seat in counties the size of Lander County, is much of a...

But did you see any changes after the seat was moved here?

It was a great convenience, because anybody who is doing anything has to have deeds recorded or papers recorded and tax questions settled and so forth and so on. It used to mean going ninety-one miles one way to do it. So it's much better.

What is the population now of Battle Mountain, do you know?

I have no idea.

Is it much smaller in Austin, right, since the mining has declined and it's not on the main transportation routes?

Austin is, right now, I think, in a slow economic phase.

Has Battle Mountain rejuvenated a lot since the new mines are here? It seems like a thriving community with new homes being built, a new hotel. Has it been going on an upward swing now?

Oh yes.

And are there a lot of new residents here?

Oh, certainly.

Because of the mines, who are settling here?

Settling here, uh-huh.

Is there anything besides the mines that is bringing this new economic revitalization?

Not that I know of.

What about tourism?

Well, tourism, of course, is quite a factor on any community on Interstate 80. So it's been very, very good. They've built some very nice motels here. I think the restaurants are thriving. I think it's doing very, very well.

What other things about your life here in Battle Mountain can you tell us? that might give us kind of an "inside picture" of a place where you've lived all your life, for those of us who are just getting acquainted. For instance, going back a little bit, when you first came, were you already using automobiles? What did you do when there were heavy snows in that earlier period? Were you isolated a lot?

No. When we had severe winters, they always managed to keep the roads open. They might be closed for a day or two, but they always managed to keep them open. The highway they kept open very, very quickly.

What about before Highway 80?

Well, it was always Highway 80.

There was always a road which was clear?

That's all?!

Right, yes.

That's all.

Tell me a little about the Indians of this region. I know that there are Indian communities, the Shoshone, and are there Piutes too? or just the Shoshone?

I see. Okay, do they have houses now?

Lovely houses!

There are a few Piutes.

Are they built by the government?

What can you tell me from the earliest period to now about the Indian population?

By the government.

I can tell you very, very little.

Is it reservation property that they own?

There's very little interaction with the community?

Uh-huh.

Well, there is, but I just didn't happen to have any. I have some good Indian friends.

Do they work in the community?

Some of them do.

Do the Indian children still go to separate schools?

What do the ones that aren't in the community... What are some of the things they do, do you know? Do they have their own agriculture?

No.

No, they all work.

So they're integrated now?

Are there other ethnic groups that live in their own communities?

Integrated, yes.

And so there are probably intermarriages?

No, there are not. There's lots of Mexicans here, but they are integrated in the community. They don't live in enclaves or anything.

Oh yes.

So everyone kind of mingles?

So that it changes the interaction with the different groups?

That's right.

Yeah. Of course the Indians live in their own community.

And how far is that from here?

In the period when they were building the railroad and some of the mines, I read that there were some Chinese then. Are there any Chinese people left in this area?

Oh, a mile.

No, and there haven't been for a long time. Now I can't even remember, but Delphina could tell you something about some of the Chinamen that stayed and sold vegetables and fish and so forth and so on.

Were there ever any black people here in this region, working in the mines or in any capacity?

There was one family: the father was the freight agent on the Southern Pacific Railroad, and he had several children.

Was his wife black as well?

Yes. And they went to school and they were integrated.

Was there any discrimination against them?

No. No, as a matter of fact, I think they had all girls except one. On the lease that Belaustegui and I had, we hired that boy, and he was good. We went to school together.

And then they left?

Well, when the parents died, the children all had married people in Elko and I don't know where else.

As children were growing up—like yours or others—did many of the children, as they were growing up, leave Battle Mountain to go elsewhere, or did many stay here?

I would say it was probably half and half.

Where are your children?

I have two living here.

Tell me their names and what they do.

One of them is named Camille, and she works at the laboratory at Battle Mountain Gold. And the other one is named Paul, and he is a cabinetmaker. And I have one that lives in Wyoming. She is a county director of Special Education. And then I have one that lives in Santiago, Chile. Her husband is in the fruit export business.

How did she meet him?

They were both going to business school in San Francisco. Oh, I have one that lives in Ruby Valley.

And where is that?

Southeast of Elko.

And what does she do there?

She works for the Wildlife Service.

I'm very impressed at how successful all of your family—especially daughters, in a period when all women haven't done such interesting things.

Yeah, well she's got a very interesting job. It's a very interesting valley, too.

So most of them stayed here. Where did some of them go for their education?

Reno.

University of Nevada at Reno?

Uh-huh. And the one that lives in Santiago now, she went to San Francisco.

Do you ever see her? Does she come back or do you go there?

Oh yeah.

Have you been there?

Several times.

Good.

And her daughter was here for about three weeks. She just left last week.

How old is she?

Twenty-two.

And she stays in Chile?

She lives in Chile, yeah.

That's interesting. So tell me—let's go back to the store—did you work in the store the rest of your working years? Because you came back and you took over the store. How long did you do that?

I was just trying to think when I sold out. [pause] I can't remember when we sold out. Several years ago.

So most of your life you ran the store, until you sold it out?

Uh-huh. Let's see, yeah.

Who did you sell it to?

One of the fellows that we sold to was an employee, and the other one was a man from Winnemucca.

And is the store still in the name of the family? Or what is the name of the store now?

No, they call it "Western Market" now.

So when I walk down, I can see Western Market and know it was your store.

Yeah, on the outskirts of town.

Is that out near where I am at Holiday Inn [521 East Front Street], at that end?

Yeah, right across the street from the Holiday Inn. It's a complex. We built it.

When did you get this lovely home?

I don't know, I think 1953.

When you got this house, the building that's now the county building was a school? Because you're right diagonal from it. Was it a school then?

Yes, it was! It was a school.

Did your children go there?

Yeah, two or three of them.

So that was handy.

Very handy!

I've been told that you've taken a lot of pictures during your years. Tell me a little bit about what kind of photographs that you have taken, when you started, and how young you were. What kind of equipment did you use? I'd like to see some of your early scenes of various parts of Battle Mountain and Lander County that we might be able to copy.

I have, I think, probably fifteen years or twenty years of aerial photographs of Battle Mountain and Copper Canyon, Natomas. Then I have really taken pictures of mines as a specialized thing—that is, of the surface operations. I do have some good pictures of the Natomas Dredge. Then there's pictures taken of the area, chiefly with my children in the foreground.

When you said aerial photos, how did you obtain those?

By going up in an airplane and taking them.

Whose airplane?

It'd be just whoever was in the business out there. There's an operator out there now that I've flown for two years with. And I plan on doing it again this spring.

Do you have special equipment?

You don't need special equipment.

You don't?

No. You don't need special equipment for oblique photographs.

When did you start taking pictures of the mines and of your family and what's the earliest period that you took these photographs?

About 1940.

Oh, good! We need to look at those. Did you collect some historical newspaper articles, or what kinds of other information on the history do you have in your collections?

I had quite a collection of interesting newspaper articles of Hilltop. But I do not have them, I've sent them all to Denmark to the grandson of one of the discoverers of Hilltop.

Oh!

But I'll tell you where you can get all of that information and really, really good, is from Paul Christopher.

Oh, I'm going to be interviewing Paul Christopher.

Well that is good, because he wrote a short history of Hilltop which is just a little gem.

Oh, I'm glad you told me, because then I'll ask him!

And I don't have it, because I sent it to Denmark!

Well thank you, that's a good tip. Is there anything else before we end the interview that might be of interest to people who are reading your interview or learning more about this region? Anything else that you can share?

The only observation that I would make is that the potential for mining in this area, in this county, is very, very great. In the papers you can read about the Pipeline Mine and the Cortez—various mines that are expanding and a new one. I can't remember the name of it, but it's a new one here about twelve miles out of Battle Mountain. Echo Bay has got several years of life left. The near future looks very good.

Well that's a wonderful observation and that's very optimistic for Battle Mountain and I thank you so much on behalf of the Lander County

Oral History Project for sharing your wealth of information.

* * * * *

This is Saturday, April 17. at 2:20 p.m., and this is the second session with Bruce Swackhamer at his home. I want to find out from you today about the charming home that you live in, its history, where it was when you first bought it, and bring it up to date to today.

Well this home was originally built at the Gold Creek Ranch, south of Golconda. When the ranch was sold around 1952, the buyer wanted to sell the house, so we bought it from him. Then we had it moved to Battle Mountain by a house mover by the name of Cline.

Can you tell us what you paid for the house when you bought it?

I really can't. It seems to me it was three thousand dollars, but that's just a guess. So in the meantime, we had poured the foundation, and when Cline got here, he maneuvered around and backed it in. With the railroad jacks and the timbers, he lowered it on the foundation. Then we hired a contractor from Elko and in the meantime we had plans drawn up for the interior. He came down and did the whole interior.

Was it common then to move whole houses?

Oh yes, there's lots of houses right in Battle Mountain that have been moved in.

Is that right?! Now tell me, did they have to clear the road and have flags and trucks before and after to control traffic?

I don't think they did in those days.

How did you get it and keep it on the foundation, when you moved it here to the foundation that you built?

Well, we've got foundation bolts that bind the sill of the house. But the weight of the house, I don't think I've ever heard of a wind in this area that would shift a house this weight.

When you moved the house to this street and this neighborhood, what was it like? How many houses were here?

Well we were surrounded by the same houses at that day as they are right now, with the possible exception of these two houses on this alley over here.

Had you purchased this lot way ahead to reserve this place?

We bought this lot before we were married.

Oh! I see. And it just stayed empty until you moved your house here.

Uh-huh.

When you had the architect design it, did you and your wife plan how you wanted your home?

Right.

Have you made any changes since?

No major changes.

It's a very charming home. And when you moved the house here, was that still a school, where the courthouse is now?

No, the courthouse came down shortly after that. I really can't remember the dates.

But it wasn't a school any longer? It had been a school, right, the courthouse?

It was a school. We lived here for several years before they moved the school to a different location.

Oh, okay. So this neighborhood hasn't changed too much since you moved in here?

No, very little.

You mentioned your father going to a hot springs resort not far from Battle Mountain. Can you tell us about that?

The "resort" is sort of an elegant word for it. It was pretty nice, though. They had a hotel there. It was built on natural hot springs. They called them "baths" in there. The customers of the hotel could loll around in these hot springs and they claimed they did a lot of medicinal health.

What did they call that hotel?

The Golconda Hotel.

I see. And did they advertise the hot springs to attract people there?

I don't know whether they advertised or not. It belonged to a man by the name of Bain. Anyway, my dad went down there and spent a week. When he came back, he said he just felt great.

Oh! Probably the rest helped too.

The rest, I think, is what helped him.

And how often would he go?

He just went twice, to my memory.

I see. And did you ever go there?

Well, it was a pretty popular place when I was going to school for school picnics and things like that. They had a big lawn out in front, and they had a ball park and swimming pool.

You'd go in the hot springs?

Uh-huh.

About how many people would be there when your father or you went? Did it have people from out of the area, or mainly people from around this area?

I think probably mostly people from round the area, but people came from quite a distance too. It had quite a reputation.

How long did it last?

It began to deteriorate, I think, probably in the twenties.

Oh, that early. But what happened with the hot springs? Were they still there to enjoy?

As far as I know, they're still there.

At Golconda, did it have much of a population as a town? or was it mainly the hot springs hotel?

No, there were various things. It was a boom and bust. They had mining activity, and it would boom and then it would go back to its...well, it's state right now.

And it's state right now is what?

Just a little community...I really don't know what they do.

People aren't going there anymore?

Not for any purpose. I think that people live there because it's convenient to their work and so forth.

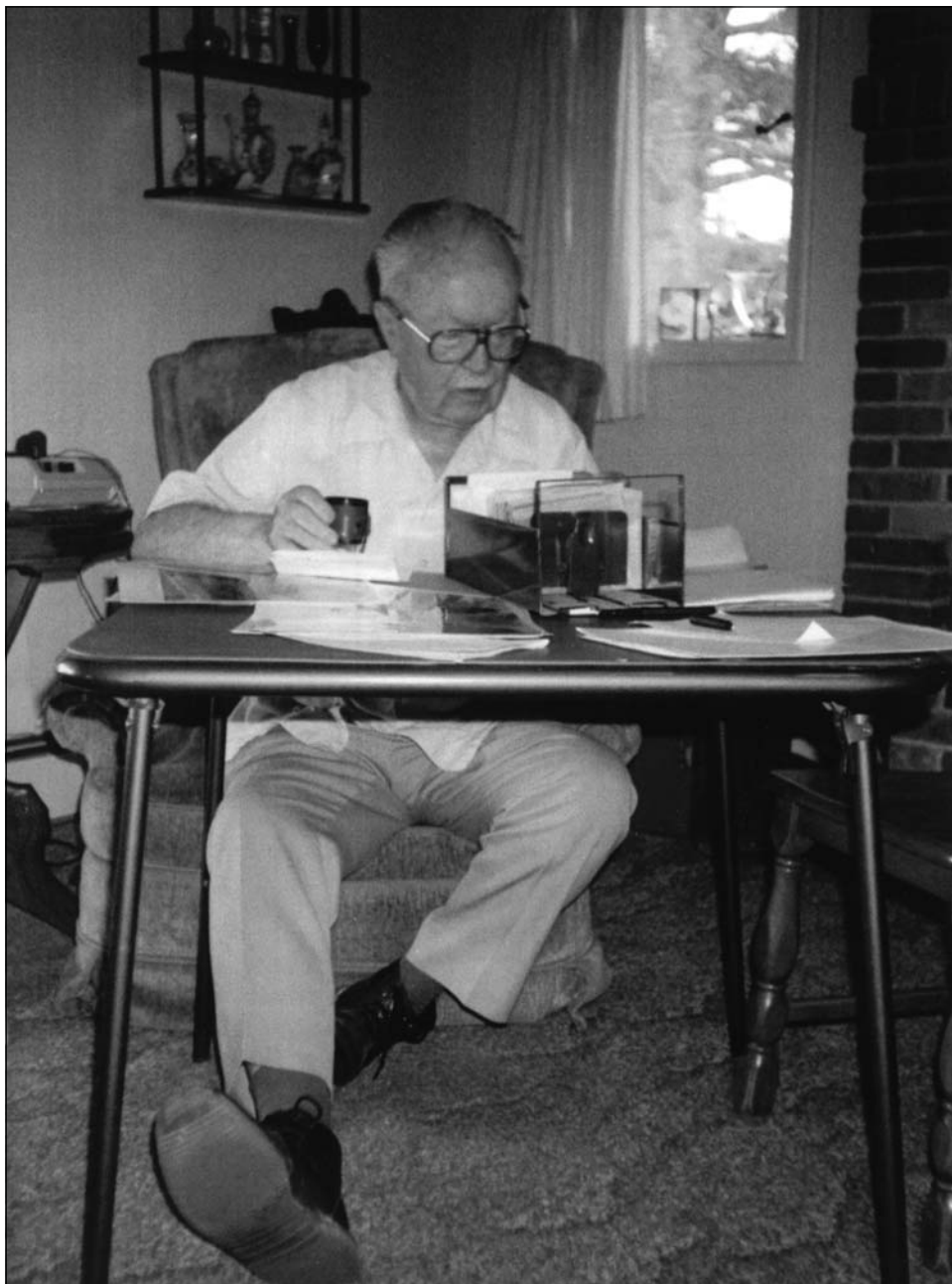
Is there anything else about Battle Mountain or your experience that you might have forgotten to tell me or want to expand upon?

No, I really can't think of anything. I think you just plucked me dry.

I looked at some more pictures today, and so when we end this interview, I hope that I can select some to borrow to copy for future use. And if you do think of other things that you forgot, then I'll be back in May. Thank you so much for taking the time for my visit here this afternoon.

BRUCE SWACKHAMER
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



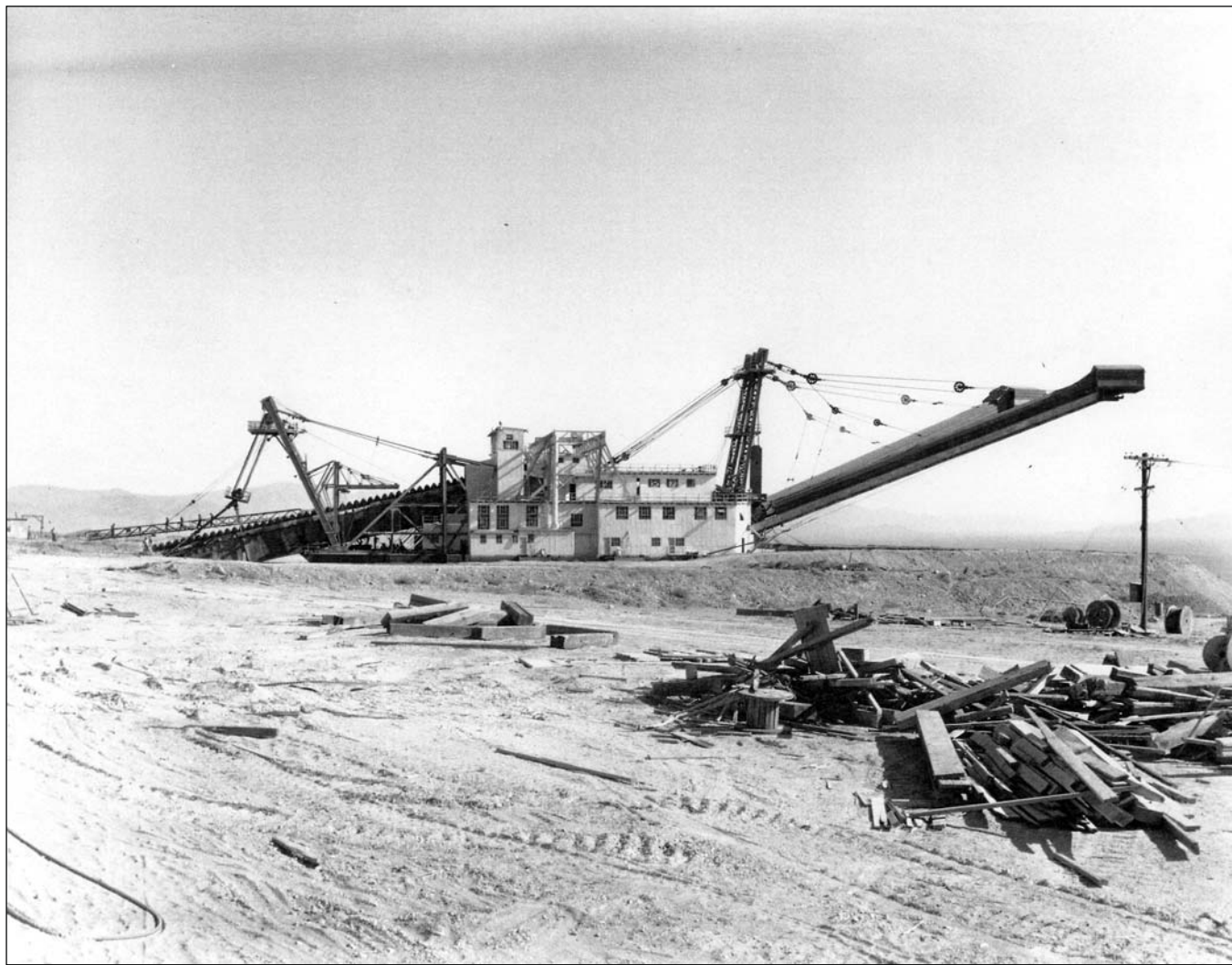
BRUCE SWACKHAMER, MARCH 15, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Post Office in Hilltop, ca. 1900 (Swackhamer's Store)

(University of Nevada, Reno Library, Special Collections Department, photograph #2545)



Main gold dredge at Natomas, Jan. 1950

(Original photograph provided by Bruce Swackhamer)

BRUCE SWACKHAMER ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

DELFINA SWACKHAMER**PREFACE**

Delfina Swackhamer is a native Nevadan, born to Basque parents in 1914. She grew up in a Basque hotel in Battle Mountain, built by her father in 1914 and operated until 1940.

Her father, Juan Belaustegui, was born in Spain. After many years on the high seas, traveling a great part of the world, he decided to settled down in the United States in 1903, eventually joining a Basque friend who owned ranches in Northern Nevada. He brought skills as a blacksmith and rancher, and worked on the ranch before building a Basque hotel in Battle Mountain. Delfina's mother, Martina Armolea, was also born in Spain. An energetic woman, she played a major role in the Basque hotel, doing all the cooking, and taking care of anyone who was ill. With her seven children, it must have been a lively place.

A vibrant woman with an excellent memory, Delfina gives a vivid portrayal of her early years growing up in a family-run Basque hotel. They slept in the hotel rooms and at an early age the children all started to help with

the chores. Basque men from Spain were brought over by sheep companies because they were accustomed to the isolated life of a sheepherder. Due to language barriers and customs, they sought out the Basque hotels when they first arrived. Most were single men hoping to accumulate some money and return to their country. However, many realized the opportunities here and either went back to Spain to return with a bride or arranged for one to join him. Through hard work and savings, many were eventually able to purchase their own ranches.

Delfina describes Basque cooking, Christmas Eve celebrations at the hotel, and big family picnics at canyons where the herders would catch a whole tub- full of fish to barbecue.

The Swackhamer home has many Basque artifacts and art reflecting her culture.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Under County Oral History Project,

interviewing Delfina Swackhamer at her home, at 382 South Humboldt, Battle Mountain, Nevada, on August 21, 1993.

Good afternoon, Delfina. I'm so pleased you agreed to allow us to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you please tell us your full name, where you were born, and when.

Delfina Swackhamer: My name is Delfina Mary Swackhamer. I was born at Taylor Canyon in Elko County on April 15, 1914.

Can you tell me your father's name and where he was born?

My father's name is Juan Belaustegui and he was born in Arvasguia, Guerriaiz, Spain, February 16, 1862.

Now can you tell us your mother's name and where she was born?

My mother's name is Martina Armolea. She was born in Navarniz, Spain, July 2, 1879.

What brought your parents to the United States?

The desire to make a good living, and he thought the United States would be a good place to go.

Were conditions difficult there in Spain?

As a matter of fact, my father was on the high seas for years and traveled a great part of the world, decided to settle down, and decided to settle down in the United States.

And do you know how they came over?

My mother and father came by boat to Blakely, Washington.

And do you know what he did to earn a living there?

He was a blacksmith. He'd apprenticed as blacksmith in Spain, and he also worked in the forests.

When and why did they come to Nevada?

Because of health problems he had to move to a drier climate, and he chose Nevada.

Did he know anyone here? Did he have work here?

Yes, he knew of some people that lived here.

Do you know when they arrived in Washington?

In early 1903.

And do you know when they came to Nevada?

In 1905.

Did he know someone here, or did he come just without knowing anyone? And where did he come in Nevada?

He knew a person by the name of [Pedro] Altube who had some ranches, and he came to Northern Nevada to work for him. And he was the blacksmith and generally worked on everything on the ranch.

I know they started to have a large family. How many children did they have when they first came to Nevada and the early part of his work on the ranch?

They had two sons.

You were born in 1914, quite a while after they arrived. Did he or your mother ever tell you about their early years in Battle Mountain?

He built two hotels. He built one and it burned down. It was called the European Hotel. And then he went back to ranching because he was destitute after it burned out—everything was burned out.

Oh, one hotel burned.

Burned to the ground, and he went back to work at the ranches. And then he came back and he built the Brick Hotel.

Now, were these Basque hotels?

Both of them.

Did that mean that Basques were coming over and they would stay?

Exactly. Right.

Do you know what it was that was bringing the Basques here to Battle Mountain?

Herding sheep. There were many sheepmen then.

Did your parents ever tell you how they heard about Battle Mountain back there? Was it word-of-mouth by people like your father?

I really don't know that part of it. I imagine...There were few Basques, and I imagine they were sort of clanish and would discuss things.

Because of the language barrier?

Yeah, and where things were good and what they liked to do, they would go to that area.

Then did you say they built a second hotel? Do you know anything about that?

Well the first hotel they built was lumber, and it was burned down in the night. They were left destitute, so my father went back up [to] Northern Elko County and ranched for a couple of years, and came back in 1910, built a two-story brick hotel, which still stands on Main Street.

Hmm, what's in that building now? Is it a hotel?

It's a bar and they still have rooms, but not the dining room and restaurant like a Basque hotel is run. But it's still there, still in business.

Did the family live at the hotel?

At first, no, we lived in a house a couple of blocks away and my father ran the hotel. And after a few years, we moved to the hotel, and that's where we grew up, basically. All of our family went to school in Battle Mountain.

Now I want to go back to your very earliest memories. You were the youngest in the family, right? So you came into a large family, and by then your family was well settled here, and the hotel was flourishing?

There was always herders around, and yes, it seemed to go fine.

Now I want to ask you to go back to your very earliest memories in the hotel. I want to ask you several things: first, what language did your parents and your family speak when they were in their home?

They spoke Basque, they spoke Spanish, and there was French Basque. It seemed like they could communicate with all of them.

International! So did you grow up learning a lot of languages?

I learned Spanish, and of course American. But you see, by the time! grew up, there was more English-speaking. But I did learn Spanish. I could understand Basque, but never learned to speak it fluently.

I would like you to describe to me a little bit about the flavor of the hotel. First, where was your living accommodations? Was it on one of the floors, or adjoining? What was it like?

My brothers slept upstairs in rooms, and the three girls slept in a room downstairs. And the hotel was a typical Basque hot it had rooms and family-style meals three times a day. The herders would come into town after they'd been in the hills for a stay, like maybe a month or something, and just stay there. It was their home.

Did you eat meals with them?

No, we didn't. We ate by ourselves.

Did your family mingle? Was it a social situation?

Very social. We were all friends. They were just like part of the family.

Were most of these men alone? Or did they start to bring their families?

They were all single men.

Was there entertainment?

Oh, they used to play cards, they used to play Basque games like Solo and Moose, and sit around and visit, tell lies, I guess, like everybody else—tell lies about the old country. You know, always just like a family.

Tell me your mother's role in all of this.

She was the cook. She did everything. She was a very energetic person. If anyone came in that was ill and they were ill upstairs, she took care of them. All kinds of things. She was wonderful to everybody.

I hope you have some pictures that we can copy.

I really don't. I have a picture of my mother and father upstairs, possibly could be copied.

Now tell me the kind of a person your father was.

Very aggressive. Like a lot of Basques, he built the hotels, subsequently went into the sheep business, subsequently bought ranches in Fallon, grubstaked I-don't-know-how-many miners. All that type thing.

Amazing! Coming from a country...

He was! Oh, he was terrific that way.

Did your parents learn to speak English?

Learned to speak English, read and write. Learned, went to night school.

So you grew up in a gregarious, lively...

Very!

Tell me when you started school. By the time you started school, were you speaking English well?

Oh yes.

What was elementary school in Battle Mountain like? How many kids were in your room in the elementary grades? And tell me, if you can remember, what the school day was like: what you were taught, did you have recess?

Yes, we had recess. We learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, everything. It seemed like we had very good teachers, because we seemed to learn pretty well. I don't remember exactly. The town was very small. There was probably ten, fifteen children in each class.

Where was the school?

Right across from where I live now—the county building. That was the old grammar school.

It looks like such a big building. Was the high school there too?

Before my time, maybe, it was there. But when I went to school it just had first through eighth grades.

That's quite a lot of grades. Did you go home for lunch?

Oh yes.

In your junior high and high school years, tell me a little about not only the school, but what kind of social activities the young people had.

We didn't have a junior high—we all went to high school. We went from eighth grade into the high school. The usual: we had basketball, tennis, gave plays, had plays, dances—the usual functions.

Probably more than they have now!

Well, actually, I think a lot of our social life was school-oriented, not like now where the kids are off and around.

Now, when you produced some plays, was it for the public to come?

Yes, it was. We had an excellent English teacher, and she was very good with drama, and did some very good plays.

Did you participate?

Sometimes. It just depended, you know, if you were selected.

Now, did you start going out with girls and fellows together? Were there dances?

Oh, yeah, there were public dances.

Did you start to work in the hotel? Did you still have the hotel?

Working at the hotel was a thing you did. It was a family affair, and we all had our chores, and we all learned to work, and we all got along really well. It was just a thing you did—your parents, your family—it was a family unit.

How old were you when you started to have little chores, and what would they be? And then progress.

Well, you'd set the table, you'd clear the table and serve the meal when the men sat down. You would help with the dishes.

How old were you when you started?

I suppose eight, ten.

Did you learn to cook too?

Not specifically there. Later on, I did. But my mother did the cooking. So we did other things so she could cook.

Did you do the laundry?

Did the laundry, made the beds, cleaned the rooms.

Was there plumbing?

Yes. No, there was a bathtub and stuff, but there wasn't plumbing in every room in those days, no.

It'd be down the hall?

Uh-huh.

And how did you do the wash?

Well we had a wringer washer.

Where did your parents buy the supplies for the meals and for all the things they needed to run the hotel?

I think in those days, they called them "drummers." They were salesmen that came through. And then of course there were a couple of stores in Battle Mountain also, where you could buy supplies.

But what about the food to feed so many? Do you know?

Well, I would imagine that my father was probably hooked up with the wholesale place where he could get things.

Or some of the ranchers for the meat and sheep?

There was a butcher shop. I know we got most of our meat there.

Were there others besides Basques who would stay in the hotel?

Oh, sure. There were other hotels downtown, but generally speaking, you would call it a Basque hotel, because they felt at home there, they could talk, they knew they'd be well taken care of.

Were some of these stopping on the way to working at other parts of the state, or other states? Or were these the sheepherders? I'm wondering who it was that came and stayed at the hotel beside the local sheepherders.

Generally speaking, it was that type that came—the sheepherders and that. There weren't a lot of transients in those days.

Did they move around to work on different sheep ranches?

Well, it seemed like some sheep company would bring them over from Spain, and they would work for two, three years, or whatever. Sometimes they would go back to Spain with their pockets full of money. And I know, I can remember my mother, inasmuch as they had a language barrier, they would buy a trunk and she would pack it with food for them, so they could have it 'til they got home.

You mean on the ship?

Mm hmm.

And was Jenkins one of them that sent over for Basques?

I would assume Jenkins. There was one out of Lovelock. And there were several people in

this area that had sheep. Sheep, at that time, was big business.

Uh-huh. Now how long did this Basque hotel stay in business under your family's name? Do you know how long they ran it?

They ran it until about 1940. His health was failing him, and he leased the hotel to someone else.

Do you know what is in that building now?

There's a bar, and they still rent the rooms upstairs. Oh, I don't know, a typical bar now with the slot machines and poker games and that type thing, that weren't in existence then.

Do you have any pictures of that early hotel that I can see later?

Yes, I do.

Now, when you finished high school, what did you do after that?

Finished high school right in the heart of the Depression. I worked at the bank for a while. There was a telephone exchange here, and you just worked.

Did you begin to develop specific interests through high school? Any special areas of interest?

I don't really think that I had my heart set on doing something. We were always busy, and then when the Depression came you knew that you were stymied.

So then what did you do? Were you still living with your family? Were they still in the hotel? What year did you graduate?

From high school in 1932.

Okay, so you were still at the hotel. You were still living at the hotel with your family?

Yes.

How was the hotel faring during that Depression period?

Well, all of us pitched-in to help with the work. Well, the banks all closed and everything. It was tough living, but you made it.

So when they leased the hotel in the forties, where did you go then?

I was married in 1938.

Okay, let's back up then. Where did you meet your husband?

We were both from Battle Mountain, went to school there.

So when did you start going together and becoming more interested?

Oh, I don't really know.

And when did you marry?

December 3, 1938.

Where did you get married?

We got married in Battle Mountain, and we had the reception at the dining room of the hotel.

Oh! That was nice! Did you go away at all? Were you able to?

Yeah we went to San Francisco.

And then where did you make your first little home?

We made it in Battle Mountain. Bruce was in mining with another man. They were doing mining out here. Subsequently, two years later, he got a job with the state and he was with the State Patrol. We moved to Reno, and then we lived in Winnemucca. And then Bruce's brother went in the Service and we came back to Battle Mountain so he could help his father with the store.

What year was that, that you came back? Do you know?

Let me think, about 1942.

Tell me, when you came back, where you lived, and what Bruce was doing.

Bruce had to go work at the store with his father because his brother Bill went into the Service. We rented a house in Battle Mountain and subsequently moved this house in and had it remodeled and made our home, where we now live.

Where was it moved from?

Gold Creek Ranch, out of Golconda in Humboldt County.

And is that where Bruce was working—I think I have all that in his interview—before he came here? Or you learned of someone who was selling it?

The house? We heard of someone that said they wanted the house moved off the ranch. They were friends of ours. And we'd seen the

house and we thought, "We can do a lot with that!" So we had it moved.

You have a very beautiful home. I'm very impressed with it. Now, you started to have a family of children.

Penny [Penelope] was born while we were in Reno. And then after we moved to Battle Mountain, the rest of our family was born. Camille [nickname Cammy].

And what was the year?

In 1944. Consuela [nickname Connie] was born in 1946, and Monica [nickname Niki] was born in 1951, and Stefanie was born in 1953, and Paul, our only son, was born in 1957.

A beautiful big family. So you were kept very, very busy in Battle Mountain, raising your family. Were your parents or any of your family still here when you moved back?

Yes they were. Bruce's mother and father were here. My father and mother had a ranch up in Northern Elko County, and they stayed up there for a while, just relaxing.

Did they ever come back to Battle Mountain to live?

Yes, they did, because the house here in Battle Mountain, that's where they continued to live until they passed away.

And so that they were able to enjoy, and you were able to enjoy them and the great-grandchildren?

Very definitely. My father really enjoyed his grandchildren. Nothing made him happier.

And to take them to a rodeo or someplace. He enjoyed them, they enjoyed him.

And what about your mom?

Also.

Did your sisters and brothers stay nearby in the state, of this great big family?

Bunny lived in Reno. My brother Nash [Ignacio] was a mechanic who worked in Battle Mountain—a sad death. He was killed in an automobile accident. My brother Joe was in the Service and he was in England during the war: married while he was there, came back with his wife, they had two children, she went back to England, he stayed here. And my brother Leon was on the verge of going to college when my brother Nash was killed, so he took over his business, and subsequently was a very successful businessman. He had gone to the university he was enrolling to, and he'd just been there a very few days when my brother was killed. [ed: Two other sisters not mentioned: Pilar and Elbeeda.]

But a lot of them lived near, so that you had a big family?

Right.

What kind of changes did you observe in the Battle Mountain area from the time you were a young gin, until you came back to live here with your family? What did you notice?

Well naturally, it had grown some. Mining became more active, and there was more activity.

I know raising that big family, you didn't have much time for outside activities. But when you

were able to, what were some of the things that you enjoyed? Did you join any organizations in town? Did you have time?

Well, actually, sure, at that time you went to the PTA. And in those days, parents—mother particularly, was room mother. Whenever there was a school function—I had plenty of them in classes—you were always asked to participate. And I was a church member—I'm a Catholic—and church. Oh, we had bridge. We had bridge group and different things.

So you had time. Did you have any help with the children?

Yeah. Later on I had an Indian girl that would do my wash and ironing. And if I was lucky enough to find one to clean house once in a while—it was a little difficult.

Except for the school and the family—which is enormous—did your family, as they were growing, what were some of the things that as a family that you did together?

We used to take the children on trips, believe it or not! Every summer I took them to Lake Tahoe for a couple of weeks. It seemed like we were always busy doing something: going on a picnic, or, I don't know.

Where would you picnic?

Oh, we have some nice canyons up here, very nice canyons.

Were your family fishers and hunters?

Not specifically—maybe to go fishing. The youngsters used to go camping quite a bit and stay overnight.

With whom?

Oh, there'd be a group. Of course, like Bruce would go, or I would go. And they'd bring a couple of their friends, go out and sleep overnight. Oh, that was great stuff for them!

I want to go back a little bit to your parents and your family there. Were there certain Basque celebrations that you enjoyed that you continued with your family?

It was a custom, when we were at the hotel, on Christmas Eve, every Basque—didn't matter if they were Basque or not—we always had a big dinner and they were all invited. We had this big feed, and then at midnight everybody would go to Midnight Mass, and after mass they would come home and have hot chocolate. And there would be bowls of nuts and oranges, and they'd sit and visit. And then there would be Basque dancing. We had quite a bit of that.

Where would you do the dancing?

In the commercial dining room. That was a social gathering place. It's quite large. The high school kids used to play basketball in there. There was a lot of activity in there.

Did you follow that custom with your own children?

Yes, for many years.

So that was a major celebration. I went to a Basque festival in Winnemucca and saw the beautiful dancing. Did your family—brothers and sisters—did you wear costumes and do the dances?

No, we never did. At that time, the Basque weren't what you'd call "too well thought of." People thought [we] were inferior. But in recent years, the Basques are more and more... The culture was always there, but no, in our time, they didn't have that.

Now, were there other customs or holidays that were celebrated by the Basque?

Not to the best of my knowledge. No, not like a big day, like the Mexicans have the Fifth of May, Cinco de Mayo. I don't recall anything like that.

Did you bring the Basque culture to your children and family?

They were exposed to it, and they seemed to like a lot of the traditions.

Did you cook the Basque type of cooking?

Certainly—still do! So do some of my daughters!

Tell us what some of those dishes might be.

Oh, there's the Basque rice, there's garbanzos. Of course, lamb—you always cook lamb. And there's Basque potatoes called "potatoes with parsley." Oh, there's several.

I was going to ask you, because I've interviewed some Basques that get together with others to have almost like "extended families." And I know they love to dance and visit, so tell me some of the things away from the hotel that the family did.

We used to have big family picnics up at the canyons. Some of the herders would

go out and catch a whole tub-full of fish, and they would barbecue those. Everybody would bring a Basque dish. The Basque men—I couldn't probably describe all of the different gymnastics they used to do in competition. They're great on that! You see that at the Basque festivals. And there's always a lot of eating, very good food, a lot of laughing, a lot of visiting. And it's just a wonderful time!

Now what canyons, and where did they catch the fish?

At that time it was at Lewis Canyon. Well, Lewis Canyon is still [there], but I don't think you could ever catch fish like that again. There was a sheep camp up at the head of Lewis Canyon, and that's where we'd go.

I know that some of the Basque young men would go back to bring back a bride. Did you know of any that came to your hotel that would do that?

There were two or three that went back to Spain and came back with a bride. That was a common practice. Until they made enough money to go back and get her and start a life, yes.

Did you know any of them when they came back? Did you know any who settled in the Battle Mountain area?

Yes, as a matter of fact one of them was a relation of mine. He was my father's nephew. I knew her quite well, yes.

Was the adjustment difficult for these young women, coming over to a new country?

Oh, I suppose to a certain extent, but it certainly doesn't take them long.

Especially with a support group like your family and the hotel!

No, they adjust pretty readily, they really do.

Now, leaving that, we know that your husband's family's store, which was one of the first and so important, and he ran it. Did the children help as they were growing up? When the children left, did any of you also help in the store?

I worked at the store. Yes, some of the girls, like inventory time they always worked at the store. During inventory, but not to clerk. They were school age, getting their education and so forth. But as to, say, come down and be a clerk, steadily, no. But they were available for help at any time.

And when you went down, what would you do?

I'd clerk, stock, did whatever. Did the books, sent out the bills.

How did you have time?

Oh, you worked things out. Kids are at school. You know.

Uh-huh. Everyone that I interview mentions the store, because of course it was so important. Can you tell me, just from your view—because it's usually different from a man's and a woman's [viewpoint]—what the store was like?

Well, it was a pretty well-run store. You had a nice choice of things, and it was well kept up. They seemed to have a way of getting

along with people. People liked to come in, and they had a nice reputation.

What were some of the things that were sold there?

Well, they had the grocery store and then the hardware store was part of the grocery store in the back. Pretty general hardware store.

Did your husband work real long hours? Did they do deliveries?

Yes, he worked long hours, did deliveries, worked six days a week, closed on Sunday.

Did your children all go through high school here?

Yes, they all graduated from high school.

When your children finished high school, did some of them stay in Nevada and make their lives in Nevada? I'm so interested when I interview, how many of the children do that—unlike California or the East. So tell me which children "stuck around" and why.

Well, Penny went to the University of Nevada, and she worked for an accountant for a while after that. And then she went to Spain. She was in Spain almost two years. And then she came back and she got a job working with the highway construction company. She worked in the office. And they were in and about various places of Nevada—you know how highway construction is. She lived in Wells, she lived in Fernley—different places. And she was married during this period to Jerry Woolverton, and at the time that they were killed, they were in Tooele, Utah, working on construction. And this car came

and hit their car, and they were both killed. Cammy, our second daughter, lives in Battle Mountain. She worked as a nurse's aide at the hospital. She was into that, she went for some training. She got married quite young and had a family. Now their family is grown and gone. She has worked at the labs and the mines and different things. Right now, she's at home. Connie went to school in San Francisco. She went to business school, and while she was there she met a Chileno by the name of Hector [Nieto]. She called me up one day and said, "I'm going to get married and move to Chile."

Oh my! [laughing] What did you think?!

I practically fainted! Anyway, she was married in Battle Mountain and we had the reception here out in the yard. And she moved to Chile, and we have been there several times. She has been here several times. She was here two months ago. And she said, "You know, Mother, I've been gone for twenty-five years." I said, "Yes, I know."

Does she have a good life? Does she like that life?

Oh yeah, sure, great. And Niki—Monica—went to college. She started at Ontario, Oregon, to the community college. Subsequently went to San Francisco, and she was a dental hygienist. She worked in San Francisco for a couple of years. And then she was going to come back to the University of Nevada and pursue the dental technician and fell in love and got married—end of the education.

What is she doing in Ruby Valley?

Well, she has a family and she works at the Refuge—the office at the Refuge in Ruby Valley. And Stefanie was our student. She

went to community college, then she went to University of Nevada-Reno. She taught school in Battle Mountain for one or two years, and then went hither to Wyoming, taught in Wyoming, and then she decided that she liked college, and she was taking summer courses until she became...She has so many degrees, I couldn't tell you! She does very well. She's in special ed. And she's been the head of special ed. and different things. About two weeks ago she got a promotion. And I think she calls it...Superintendent? I don't know. Paul just walked through. He went to the University of Nevada. He went to school in Cedar City, Utah, and is in the Air National Guard. He's a carpenter. He does whatever.

And he lives here? Does he live here with you?

No. He's gone and back, and gone and back.

A wonderful big family! And now tell me, what is your life like now?

Well, it's like anybody else that's retired: You try to entertain yourself and go and do things. Your family comes to visit quite frequently, and you go to visit your family. We travel for...Oh, we went many places, we had some wonderful trips: Europe, Australia, Hawaii. And now we kind of just go and we feel like it.

What are kind of the favorite—whether it's quiet things, or what's your favorite things in your life? Not your family, but your own personal kind of favorite things. Is it reading, or...

Yes, I definitely like to read. And after I'm through, like in the morning, I go upstairs and lie down on the couch and read for a couple of hours, and then I come back down all rested

up and ready to go. I enjoy lots of things: I enjoy movies, I like to go...

Where do you go to the movies?

Go to Winnemucca. That's just a nice drive. We used to have a movie theater, but we don't any more. And I don't know, what do you do? I play bridge. I play golf—not every day or every week, but I did for a long time. I played golf every week.

When did you start golf?

After we retired out of The store. I've been playing for quite a while. Whenever we'd take a trip, I'd take my golf clubs and play.

What or who started you in that?

I always had a desire to play golf, but never had the opportunity.

Good for you!

So when we retired, I said, "You've got a few years on you, but you can still swing a club," so I went and took lessons and started to play golf, and I loved it!

Great! Wonderful!

And now, you know, I don't have the energy I used to have, but I still go.

I'm going to copy your family information to add to your interview, and thank you so much for sharing the history of your family and yourself for the Lander County Oral History Project. This is the end of the interview.

DELFINA SWACKHAMER
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



DELFINA SWACKHAMER, AUGUST 21, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



The Belaustegui's Basque Hotel, Hotel Commercial, Battle Mountain, September 18, 1930.

(Original photograph owned by Delfina Swackhamer)



Mr. and Mrs. Juan Belaustegui, parents of Delfina Swackhamer, May 30, 1962

(Original photograph owned by Delfina Swackhamer)

DELFINA SWACKHAMER ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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WILLIAM SWACKHAMER**PREFACE**

William Swackhamers father operated the only general merchandise store and post office at the active Hilltop Mining Camp near Battle Mountain, Nevada. His mother came there to be a schoolteacher where she met and married Mr. Swackhamer. William, born in 1914, the second of four children born at Hilltop, remembers the good strong family relationship with living accommodations right behind the store.

When William was ten, the mine closed and they moved to Battle Mountain where his father bought an existing store. At first they lived behind the store, but soon were able to rent a large house and three more children joined the family. William describes Battle Mountain: the trains running through town; school days; fishing and hunting with his father and ice-skating on the river at night.

William started to work in his fathers store as soon as he graduated from high school. He enlisted in the military during World War II and when he returned to Battle Mountain four

years later, his family had purchased another store, and the business was expanding and improving. William worked in the store until they sold it in 1972.

William's father was always involved in prospecting and mining. William often went with him and describes in detail how placer gold is found. During the Depression the Swackhamer store was the only one which accepted little nuggets of gold found by customers who exchanged the gold for food and other items. "A miniature example of economics," a significant portion of money came into town and spread around. It was William's responsibility every Sunday to prepare and package the gold and put it on the express train to the San Francisco mint. Since there were no banks to cash a check, the mint sent them gold pieces in a canvas sack until the bank reopened. This went on until World War II when people could get jobs and metal prices went up.

William got into politics when he returned from the military in 1946. The Democratic Party asked him run for the Nevada Assembly

and he got elected. For twenty-six years he continued to get elected and combined his work in the store with his political life. When the store was sold in 1972, Governor O'Callaghan appointed him Secretary of State, an office he held for fourteen years. He and his wife moved to Carson City and have lived there ever since.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing William Swackhamer at his home, at 1107 West King Street, Carson City, Nevada. The date is September 15, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Swackhamer. I'm so glad that you gave me permission to come to Carson City to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you please give us your full name, your date of birth, and where you were born.

William Swackhamer: My name is William D. Swackhamer, I was born in Winnemucca, Nevada, on August 18, 1914.

When you were born in Winnemucca, was your family living in Winnemucca or Battle Mountain?

We were living at Hilltop, which was a little mining camp about eighteen miles east of Battle Mountain. I never lived in Winnemucca as such. My mother went there for...We didn't have a hospital in Battle Mountain at that time. That was the only connection we had with Winnemucca.

And in Hilltop—and I know your brother gave me some information—but did you live very long in Hilltop? Do you have memories of that period?

Yes, I think when we left there—the mine closed down, that's why we left there—I think I was in the fourth or fifth grade at the time, so I do have some rather vague memories, but I do have some of Hilltop, yes.

Why don't you share with me two separate areas: first memories of your home life and the surroundings, and then of your school days.

Well, in the early days, my father ran a store at Hilltop. He had the post office and everything like that. And our living accommodations were right behind the store. They were not as modern as we would expect them to be today, but we lived very nicely. We had a good strong family relationship. My mother came to Hilltop to be a schoolteacher, and my father had bought that store there. He had come from Colorado with a mining group, and he stayed and bought the store, and he and my mother got married. And that was the start of our family.

Was she teaching at Hilltop?

Oh yes, she taught in Hilltop. And then when my father and mother got married, she quit being a schoolteacher. But then I think when I was about four or five years old, the teacher that had contracted to come failed to come, so my mother got rehired, and so she taught for a couple of more years.

Were you in her classroom as a student?

Yes, I was.

That's unusual. Now how many children were there in the family, and where were you in the lineup?

I was second in the lineup. There were four boys and four girls. One of the girls died

practically in infancy. She was next in line to me. Bruce was the oldest.

That's a really big family. Did you interact in the store? Did you go in and out of the store?

As a child? Oh yeah, sure, we played all over.

Tell me from your long-ago recollections, what did the store look like?

I don't remember that.

Let's get back to the school days. This was a one-room schoolhouse?

Oh yes! I guess there were about twelve or thirteen kids.

How many were from your family?

Just two.

I see, at that time. What did it look like at Hilltop to a child? How many families lived there? Were there other things besides your father's store? What did it look like?

Well, it was a typical mining camp. There was a small hotel right next to the store on the west, and on the east side, just practically adjacent to our store building, there was a saloon. There was another saloon across the street. There was a boarding house, and there were some bunkhouses for the men. And there were a few families there—I don't remember how many.

And what did the kids do for fun?

I don't remember exactly, but I think we had more fun than they do now! [chuckles]

And did you have chores when you were young?

The only chore that I can remember is when my sister Harriet was born, my mother would make me [laughs] rock the cradle, and I hated it because I wanted to go out and play.

How old were you when the family left Hilltop to move into Battle Mountain?

Let's see, I imagine I was around ten.

Was that because the mine had closed?

Yes, there was no further business for my father and he had to find a new location.

So when you moved to Battle Mountain, did he start a store there immediately?

He bought a store there, it was in operation, yes.

What kind of living quarters did your family find there?

At first they were very poor—they were right behind the store. But shortly afterwards my father was able to rent a large house, and for those days it was a very good place to live.

When you left Hilltop, how many children were there in the family?

There were four: two boys and two girls.

And then they increased while you were in Battle Mountain?

Right.

When you moved into Battle Mountain and you were ten, had you been in Battle Mountain very much from the mine?

Oh every Sunday we all went to mass. Mother was Irish, and my father had no particular religion, but he saw to it that we got to mass every Sunday. Yes, so we were there quite a lot.

When you moved there and you were ten, what was Battle Mountain like?

Frankly, not very much. I think there were probably five or six hundred people there. It was a very small place. It was a dusty, windy place. I would say it was not a very desirable place—you surely wouldn't retire there. But I loved it, I thought it was the greatest place in the world.

I imagine all the roads were dirt?

Oh yes! There were no paved streets. Wasn't even sewer system at that time.

So tell me, in your household, where did you get your water?

We had a well, and then they finally put in a city water system. Everybody had their own wells in those times.

Were there any trains there? Was the Battle Mountain to Austin train or the freight trains going through when you were there?

Oh yes! The Central Pacific, which was then the Southern Pacific, ran right through the town. In fact, the town grew up around the railroad. And then at that time the Nevada Central Railroad ran between Battle Mountain and Austin. It was on its last legs at that time.

Did you ever ride it?

Never did. I'm sorry to have to say that, but I never did.

I understand the last train is in the Sacramento Railroad Museum. Did you know that?

I saw it, you bet! Yes I did. It's a beautiful coach.

When you got to Battle Mountain, tell me where you went to school and what school days were like in your elementary grades.

The school that we went to is now the courthouse. I would say it was very good. There weren't a lot of kids, but we had every opportunity for a good education. If we wanted to take it, it was there. And most of them did. We had a good educational system.

Do you remember any teachers that were especially important to you?

Not in the elementary school. In high school I remember one teacher that was exceptional, but that was in my high school days.

And where did you go to high school?

At Battle Mountain. The high school was right in the same location the hospital is now.

Now when you were growing up and your father had the store, did you work in the store?

After I graduated from high school, yes. See, the Depression came along and things were pretty tough. I went to work in the store to help Dad so that we could...It was practically a matter of survival.

Now during those years of high school, did your father and brothers do hunting and fishing in the area?

Oh yes! you bet! My father was a crack shot. He used to bring home a lot of sage hen, and we used to go fishing. Yes, we did a lot of that.

Where would you go fishing?

At Trout Creek or Mill Creek, mainly. There was some bass fishing on the river, but it wasn't too good.

Where did you hunt, and what did you hunt for?

We always just hunted for sage hen.

How old were you when you got to shoot your first sage hen?

[chuckles] I don't remember.

You were young?

Quite young!

Now, as you were growing up as a teenager, what kind of activities did young teenage boys and girls have in Battle Mountain?

Well, I don't know about the girls, but the boys, as I've already stated, we did a lot of hunting and fishing. In the wintertime we had skates, we'd go down on the river and skate at night. Of course in the summertime we played a lot of ball. And we just had a good time. I mean, we had a real good youth—that's all I can say. We had a very, very good time when we were growing up.

Did you ride horseback?

Never did. Well, I rode horseback, but we never owned a horse.

In high school, when boys and girls started to socialize together, were there dances?

Oh yes, but the boys outnumbered the girls by two or three to one [chuckles] so it wasn't as social as it could have been if it was more equally divided.

From the time you arrived at ten until you finished high school, were there many changes in Battle Mountain, in the city?

From the time we arrived there until the time I graduated from high school? No, a little growth, but very slow, very slow.

There were no new mines opening?

No.

How long after high school did you work in your father's store?

Practically as soon as I graduated from high school I went to work in the store.

And for how long did you stay there?

Until I went in the Army, during World War II.

What year did you graduate high school?

In 1931.

So you were a long time in the store.

I was a long time in the store, right

So when the war started, were you drafted, or did you volunteer?

No, I enlisted.

Into what branch?

Army Air Corps.

Were you away from Battle Mountain very long?

Oh yes, I was in the Service for pretty near four years, and a lot of it was out of the country.

Just quickly, what were some of the countries and did you have any problems, or did you come out of it without any damage to yourself?

The only country I served in was Italy. I was in a bomb group in southern Italy, and I was in the Army for all that length of time, and I never even got my feelings hurt!

[laughs] That's a wonderful way to put it! When you got back to Battle Mountain, how did the war affect Battle Mountain, what was it like?

It was much more prosperous than when I left. Of course the price of metal went way up, and mines were running good and the town was growing and more prosperous.

So did you go back to live in Battle Mountain?

Yes.

So tell me when you got back, what your life started to be like. Did you work in the store?

Yes.

So when you went to the war and you came back to work in the store, because it was prospering, what were some of the changes in the store? What were some of the things you started to sell that maybe you didn't before. How did the store grow?

Well, when I was in the Army, my brother and my mother bought another store, a competitor, that was better located than ours, and he also sold hardware. So in addition to what we were doing there, we also started selling hardware.

And were there a lot more customers? Was your business picking up economically?

Yes it was.

Were you living at home all during this period, your whole family?

Well, I lived at home until I got married, yeah.

What year did you get married?

In 1949.

Tell me where you met the young woman that you were going to marry, and a little bit about how long you were dating before you got married.

Well, I met the woman I married—and I'm still married to her—she came here in the late thirties, I think it was, to be a nurse at the hospital. And then she left and got married, and her marriage wasn't successful and she came to Battle Mountain because she was familiar with it then, to get a divorce, and that's where I met her.

What is your wife's name, including her maiden name?

Joyce Smith.

When you said she knew Battle Mountain, had she lived there?

Well, at the time she served in the hospital as a nurse.

How long did she serve as a nurse there?

I don't think very long, maybe a year.

So when you married, where was your first home together?

Well, we rented a little place kind of close to the cemetery [chuckles] which might not have been a good place. But then we built a house. The house that we built and lived in was right next to Harriet. Have you met my sister, Harriet?

No.

Well, it's catty-cornered across the street from the Catholic church.

Were you running the store or helping in the store all those years?

Oh yes.

Did your dad get involved with any prospecting and mining?

Oh yes, he was involved all the time. That was one of his greatest interests, prospecting and mining. So yes, he was involved.

Did he ever take you along?

Oh yes!

Going back to the earliest time that you went prospecting, first I want to know how old you were—and for those who have no idea what prospecting means, especially where you're not panning gold in water—tell us what you did when you went prospecting.

Well, the only times that I went, my father was able to get ahold of some patented mining claims, and I went with him from time-to-time when he was examining the stuff. Really, that's all the prospecting I did.

When you say "examining," what kind of minerals?

Gold.

Did your father ever have success with prospecting?

I would say yes, moderate success with the mine. He leased the mine and collected royalties for quite a while. So yes, I'd say he had moderate success.

Now, your brother Bruce told me that you and your dad were involved with gold. I don't know anything about in what way, so I'd like you, for people like myself, in a very elementary way, start from the beginning and explain what it was that you and your dad were involved with.

Well, in this western part of the United States, there's lots of places where there is placer gold. Now placer gold is a gold that you find in the gravel, that's been washed through someplace. Well, in fact, that's how Virginia City got found. But the trouble with it is, that in the early days this whole country

was underwater, and the gravel was washed freely, every which way. And of course now it's all desert. The amount of gold in the gravel is much smaller than the rich streams in the California Gold Rush, which meant a person had to work harder and get less. So, it's not economically feasible. The places that were where there was some water to wash it, that was mined out real fast. I don't mean a lot of gold, but there was gold. The problem was, it was nearly impossible to recover without some water. That was the only way they had of doing it. So, when the Depression came in the early thirties, the price of metals went down to practically nothing. All the mines that were working, closed up because they couldn't keep in operation. And then on top of that we had a very severe drought. The ranches couldn't feed their cattle because they didn't have any feed, and nobody was buying cattle because the market was flooded. You didn't have to pay any rent. I think you could buy a pair of Levi's for \$1.75. Gasoline was twenty-five cents a gallon. So this was far from being a good living, but they were not starving to death either, so it worked out. And then as I say; we bought it all week long, and then on Sunday my job was to get up and prepare the gold for shipment to the mint and make out the affidavit. And then my dad would sign the affidavit and put it on the express train, and it went to the San Francisco mint. The following Saturday, without any problem, we always got our returns back. But it was not a check, because there was no place to cash it. What we used to get returned back to us were gold pieces in a canvas sack. That's the way we did. We went for quite a long time, just that way. And it was kind of a miniature example of economics, that these guys might have twenty dollars' worth of cash and they'd buy seven or eight dollars' worth of stuff

from us, which was enough. I mean, they weren't starving. And then they'd have a little left over for this or for that. And it wasn't all the money that came to town, but it was, I think, a significant portion of the money that came into that little town. It was just spread around, and it not only helped them, but it helped everybody else somewhat. So it was a good stroke of business. And then of course when somebody took the bank over and reopened it, then the mint started sending us the money by check, because we could do business in an ordinary way.

I have several questions before you go further. Number one, you said you "prepared the gold to send." What does that mean?

I weighed it up to see how much there was, and then put it in a bottle and put it in a cardboard box with packing and stuff like that so it didn't get broken. And then we had to make an affidavit where the gold came from generally. And I made that out, but that was all the preparation—it was no great deal.

Were these little nuggets of gold?

Yeah.

What were the various sizes?

Anything from a grain smaller than a grain of wheat, to maybe one the size of a pea.

Were there ever any photographs?

Not that I remember.

It didn't seem historic then, huh?

No. Now that I'm old, there's a lot of things I wished I'd done, but I didn't.

How long a period of time are you talking about before you got it back in checks? About how many years or months?

I think two or three years. But now this is just a guess, I can't remember that good, but probably two or three years.

And then when they started to send you checks, how long did that go on?

Well that went on until World War II started. I can still remember this vent vividly: I was in the store, this was Sunday morning, December 7, and I was preparing the gold for shipment to the mint and a man come in and told me that the Japs were bombing Pearl Harbor. So when that happened, of course, the price of metals went right up, and people could get work where they could get a lot more money, so that was the end of the gold buying. It just stopped. Number one, there was no longer any use for it, nobody was doing that kind of work anyhow.

That's fascinating. It's the first time I've heard about this exchange of gold. After your dad started to do that, did others do that too?

No, we were the only ones.

Sounds like you had a very bright, innovative, and creative father!

[chuckles] Oh I sure did! He was a sharp person.

Tell me a little bit about him so we can get a picture of him.

My father was born in Missouri on a small farm, and there were several of them. They were not very prosperous, you can be sure.

So at the age of sixteen, my father left the farm to go to Colorado to work in the mines. He worked in the mines for several years there. In fact, in August we were there in the country on that Durango-Silverton Railroad that you see in the motion pictures. We took that trip. Apparently my dad was a very good ball player, and he was invited to become an Elk. And then some financiers wanted to send a prospecting expedition to Nevada to try to find ore bodies. And they hired a geologist from the Colorado School of Mines to come out, and my dad was his assistant. My dad was not an engineer, he was just an assistant, but they were there for two years in Crescent Valley. They never found anything—they missed a couple of good ones, though. But anyhow, when the two years was up, this professor had to go back to his job, and Dad stayed in Nevada. He worked in Beowawe for a while and then this store in Hilltop became available and he purchased that.

Tell me a little about his personality. Was he outgoing? How was he with his children? Did he ever have a part of him that was frivolous or playful? Or was he serious? Tell us a little bit about that part of him.

My father was not serious. He had a good personality, he was an outgoing sort of person. Everyone liked him. We had a very, very fine childhood, all of us. My mother was Irish, very Catholic, and she was much more strict than my dad. But she too was probably too tolerant, so we had a very good life.

Sounds wonderful. Now let's get back to you and your wife. Did you have a family?

No, Joyce had two children by a previous marriage when we were married. We pretty much raised them, but we never had any of our own.

And what are their names?

Rebecca Backus—Tucker, now—and Lloyd Backus.

Did they take the name of Swackhamer?

No, and I never adopted them legally, although for all intents and purposes I claim I have minority interest in them anyhow—they're great kids.

Now, how long did you stay in Battle Mountain, working in the store?

Well, let's see now, what year did we sell out? [pause] We sold out, sold the store. We did very well, and that's when we realized some day I was going to die without ever having lived. And we had an opportunity to sell that market portion of it. We sold that and I retired. And I think it was around in 1972, and I was going to just live the "life of Riley," sit on the front porch or something, I don't know. But anyhow, I found out I didn't like retirement all that well.

So you lived a major portion of your adult life in Battle Mountain. What were some of the changes that you saw from the time you came back after the war to the seventies? How had the population grown? What was happening with Battle Mountain?

Well, one large mine started up—they had quite a large payroll. The general level of prosperity was greater. The people began to move in and build homes like they intended to stay. And the town got bigger, and we had a flood and got rid of a lot of substandard housing then. We got the streets paved, and it just became more of a town than a mining camp is about what you'd have to say.

I know when Highway 80 bypassed the town, certainly there must have been some who were happy to get the traffic from the main street, and some businesses that hated to see some of the cars bypass. How did that change Battle Mountain?

Well, by that time I was pretty much gone. So I expected it to be a lot worse than it was. But from talking to various ones, it wasn't as bad as most people thought it was going to be.

Now, you said you were gone, and I know that you got into politics, and I want you to tell us when you first left Battle Mountain and how you decided to get into another phase of life.

Well, I got into the political life before I left Battle Mountain.

Tell us about it.

Well, I got home in 1946, and it was an election year. The fellow that was pretty much the head of the Democratic Party—or at least he was always putting the program together—wanted to have a candidate for the Nevada Assembly. And one way or another they settled on me. And I thought that would be a nice adventure, to try that one time, and I did, and was successful. I just came down here for during the session, I continued to live in Battle Mountain.

Now tell me a little about the campaign when you were running for Assembly and what your responsibilities were.

Well, the campaign was relatively easy, because as I told you, my father was a very well-known, very popular guy. And when somebody was discussing this race they'd say,

“Well, that’s old Swack’s kid,” see. That was all that was needed! [chuckles] I really got elected real easy.

Now how old were you when you were elected?

Hm, in the thirties, but I can’t remember exactly.

And what were your responsibilities? What were some of the things during your term that were accomplished or that were a problem?

Well of course I was just like every other member of the Legislature. The problem when I first went down there was our educational system was falling to pieces. It was practically in chaos. That was the biggest problem we had to deal with. When Governor Russell was governor, who was a very good friend of mine—he was a Republican, but we were still very good friends—he spearheaded the thing. Now we have, as a result of Charlie’s efforts, and some others—Mr. Bastian’s efforts, and some others—we got an educational program that not only is well-financed, but it’s working well and for the kids that will learn, we have a very good educational system in Nevada.

Now how long were you in the Assembly after that first election? What was the term?

It was two-year terms, and I was in there altogether for twenty-six years.

You mean you ran and got elected every time?

Well, the last time I got the boot.

Wow, that’s a long time. The term was two years?

Two years, uh-huh.

What year did you finally get off the Assembly?

In 1972.

That’s amazing. Did you ever stay here longer as things got busier? Or how often would you come?

I’d just come for the session. Actually, by the Constitution, the session is sixty days, but all that means is that you stop getting paid in sixty days. But it used to be, we never finished, I remember, except once, in the sixty-day period. But we’d stay seventy or seventy-five days. We’d have to stay over for a week or two weeks to finish up the business, for which there was no pay. And in those days, there wasn’t any per diem either. But now it just seems like it goes on forever. I think it was pretty near July when they adjourned this time.

Two things: How did you handle coming with all that expense; and what happened at the store?

Well, of course the Legislature meets in the winter, and that’s the slowest time of business. But my brother Dick was there looking after things. On Friday afternoons, as soon as the session adjourned, I got in the car and went home, and probably tried to accomplish a week’s work in two days. I’d have Saturday and Sunday. I’d leave to come down here usually about eight o’clock Sunday night, unless we had a bad storm or something like that, and then I’d have to come earlier. But I never lost touch with the store while I was serving down here.

Where would you stay here?

In a motel.

Did your wife ever join you?

No, not permanently. After we were married, she had the kids, and—so it wasn't practical for her to come down here and stay. On occasions when there was some social function or something like that, that was nice, she would come down for a couple of days.

Now, in 1972 you finished your many years in the Assembly?

Yes.

And then what did you do then, after 1972?

Well, as I said, I intended to retire, but I didn't find that too interesting either. And Governor O'Callaghan called me up one time and told me the Secretary of State was going to resign and would I like to take a crack at that. So I said, "Yes, that'd be nice." And so then I got that.

Now, several things: What year was that, and is that an appointment?

Well, it was an appointment that time, because the incumbent was resigning. But it's an elective office.

What year was that, and did you then have to move to Carson City?

Yes. It was 1972, we moved down here. I think we bought this house in January of 1973 and we've lived here ever since.

This is not only a beautiful house, but the location is gorgeous under the mountain.

Yeah, we have a nice place here. The wind comes whistling off [laughs] the hills.

When you came down, how long was that first appointed term of Secretary of State?

Well, I was in for two years and then I had to run again.

You were away from Battle Mountain and your father's name. What was your campaign like?

[pauses to think] Well, I can't tell you that. I campaigned, I went around and met people, and talked about the office. Frankly, I don't think I had a very good opponent—[otherwise] I'd probably have lost—but I did win.

Well, that's to your credit, because this was a different city, different location, and not where you were well-known.

And also, I had never, practically, spent any time in Las Vegas. That spooked me pretty bad. But I did very well in Las Vegas.

Oh my goodness! Tell, me, in your role of Secretary of State, what were some of the major things that you had to confront? What were some of the things you're proudest of? What were some of the most difficult things?

Probably the most challenging thing we had at the time: we were still using the Secretary of State as the office that filed the corporations. They were still using basically the same way of doing it that they used [for the previous] fifty or seventy-five years. But it was just getting overwhelmed, and that was pretty much of an emergency. So we spent quite a bit of time, we brought modern business methods in and got that straightened out, and it worked very well, and it's worked very well ever since. That was our major problem. And then of course the Secretary of State is

also the chief election officer. We had a good election law—I'm not so sure it's good any more—but we had a very good election law, but it was beginning to get outdated. We had to use a different voting system. But then a lot of other things: For instance, we had the copyrights, and we had the UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) division, we had the notary publics. We had quite a number of various functions that are quite minor, but they're quite important too. So we had a lot to do, and it was interesting, and I enjoyed it.

Now, I know that Nevada is a state that's very friendly for businesses. Tell us a little about some of the things that enticed—and still does—businesses here to this state.

Well, the principal thing, I think, is we don't have the corporate income tax.

No corporate income tax?!

No. And of course when I was Secretary of State we made the most of that: We advertised that we didn't have a corporate income tax and the function how the office handled the corporations. See, we were competing pretty near head-to-head with Delaware for that type of business. We were at the tail-end, because our law was fairly new and had not been tested, and practically every word in the Delaware Code had been tested in court. So lawyers were more apt to be comfortable with filing in Delaware. But they became more and more interested in Nevada, because they knew that they could get the service they needed. If they had to have a corporation filed on a certain day, we would do it—sometimes even on a certain hour—you know, for tax purposes or something like that. They couldn't get that in any other state, so the business just grew and grew.

Now, did it pay? Obviously, it did, but tell me, without paying corporate taxes, did it make up for it in all other ways, by coming, and the employment and the money that it generated?

Well, obviously, the Office of Secretary of State generated more than they spent. We produced two or three million dollars a year as I recollect it, for the General Fund. Obviously, a corporate income tax would have produced a lot more than that.

But by having them come here, that generated the whole economy of Nevada?

It helped to generate the economy—it wasn't really any significant thing, but it was a help.

How long did you run Secretary of State?

I was in there for fourteen years.

Fourteen years! Were there dramatic changes in that fourteen years?

Oh yes, indeed!

Tell some of the changes.

Well, as I told you, we didn't accept any particular important new assignments, but the principal thing we did was to modernize the Corporation Division. That was the biggest division we had. And we were able to increase the voter efficiency. We got the whole state on the punch-card voting system, which is a more accurate system of doing it, and it's much more inexpensive. In the old days, when we used the paper ballot, they used to have a voting board and a counting board: two different boards. With the punch-card system we eliminated the one. So not only did we save

a lot of money, but we got a more efficient and a more accurate count on our votes, so that was, I think, a significant accomplishment.

Tell me some of the corporations that came during the period that you were Secretary of State.

I can't remember. One of the girls did make a list of odd corporate names that we registered. I've still got that. But I can't remember.

It would be interesting to know that. Before we leave that, tell me, when you came to Carson City and established your life here, did you still go back regularly to Battle Mountain?

Not regularly, but periodically, yes.

Did you miss the Battle Mountain area?

I don't think so. Joyce loved Carson City. She came from the Los Angeles area, and she didn't care much for that because it was too big, but she never complained about living in Battle Mountain in such a small town, but I'm sure that she was just delighted to live here, because this was the kind of a place she wanted to live, and I was so busy it didn't make any difference to me where I lived, so it worked out just fine.

Charming area, and of course so close to Reno and the University.

Uh-huh, I could walk to work.

Oh, that's wonderful! In Battle Mountain, when the county seat was finally changed through a vote, from Austin—I know you were away from Battle Mountain, but did you hear a lot about

it? Did you have any first-hand knowledge of that activity?

Oh sure! Naturally. I knew about it, and we followed it with interest.

Did it affect Battle Mountain in helping it grow, by having the offices there?

I don't think so. I don't think it helped it grow, but it certainly helped the people that had to do business with the county, because otherwise they'd have to drive ninety miles to Austin, and 90 percent of the population lived in the Battle Mountain area. So in that way, it was a great advantage. As far as bringing prosperity to the town, I'm sure it didn't.

I thought maybe it brought more employment because of the people hired to work in the county offices.

Well, yes, but that would be quite minor. But there would be some, yes.

I know you were away, but through your position and through your family, were you aware of economic changes in the Battle Mountain area?

Of course, you bet. See, after we sold the market, Bruce continued to run the hardware store and I had a beautiful deal there—he did all the work and I got half the profits! [laughter]

How long did your mom and dad live?

Oh, it's an awful thing to have to tell you, but I can't recollect exactly when my dad died. It was in the late forties.

What did he do after he was out of the store, when you fellows took over?

He was ill, and he was ill for quite a long time. And my mother died, let's see, I think my mother died around 1951 or 1952.

Now the other brothers and sisters, how many stuck around the area?

Well, Bruce is still there. Harriet is still there, Harriet Poulin. She married a man that was in business there. My sister Roma married a man from Oklahoma that was a pharmacist, and she lived in Ada, Oklahoma for a long time, but then they moved to Battle Mountain and they're still there. And then I was down here. My brother Dick... When we bought the store, we bought Dick's interest out, and he moved. Then he and his wife got a divorce, so he was loose, so he came back there and lived. And he was living there when he died. My sister Leah [Chiara], which is the youngest girl in the family, she married a fellow from Battle Mountain who was in the school system, and he became one of the school officials here in Carson City. They lived here, and she still lives here, but he died at an early age. So she's still here. And my youngest brother Paul was involved with a land mine in Korea and never recovered his health—he died.

Oh my. It's amazing, in all of the interviews, how many of the family members stay around the area. And I think compared to most places in the United States that I've observed, it's pretty remarkable.

Is that right? Well, I imagine if it hadn't been for the family, if there was just one there, they probably would have moved. But then

my brother Bruce had a large family and he had quite a large investment in his house. My sister Harriet had a very nice home, Roma has a very nice home. So those are all things that...

And the ranchers that had the land for their children.

Well, none of us were ranching. Oh yeah, if you were a rancher, they'd stay there, sure.

Do you and your family get together on holidays?

Occasionally, yeah. Grand times!

Now when you finished as Secretary of State, what was your life like then until now?

[immediate reply] Dull.

[laughs] That was a quick answer! What are some of the things that are your favorite interests that you get to do?

Well, one of the things that we planned on for years and got to do: Oh, I guess twenty or twenty-five years ago when our business, you know, we got everything paid for and business was good—I suddenly found out that I had some disposable income. Ever since high school days I've had a great desire to travel and see the world. And so suddenly the Boeing Company came out with that airplane that made international travel fast and cheap, so we have been all over the world. We've done a lot of traveling. I know we've been in every country in Europe except Albania. Well, we've been on every continent, except Antarctica, of course. So we've seen the world, and really have done that. However, I've not

seen as much of the United States as I wanted to, because we take these long, boring flights while we're still in relative good health. And then if that got too sickening, we'd travel in the United States, take shorter hops. But then my vision has deteriorated in the last two or three years, so we haven't done much of anything.

I'm sorry to hear that, but you certainly have led a varied life and a life of contribution to your state in so many ways. Now, I'm sure there are many things I didn't ask, so let me ask you to tell anything from your life that would help anyone wanting to know more about especially Lander County or your work that influenced or affected Lander County.

Well, except for the fact that we were progressive, we were not willing to go along year after year in the same old way, we not only improved ourselves, but I think we forced our competition to get a little bit off the dime. But I don't know of any great contributions that I made that affected Lander County directly, no.

I'm sure your work here in the Assembly and as Secretary of State affected Lander County.

But to no more greater extent than any other county.

Right. What do you see in the next decade? What changes or what kind of economy? What will life be like in the next decade in Lander County, specifically?

That's the easiest question to answer in the world: It depends entirely on the price of metals. If the price of metals goes down, the economy is going to get bad. If the price of metal stays up pretty well, I think you can expect a good economy for the next decade.

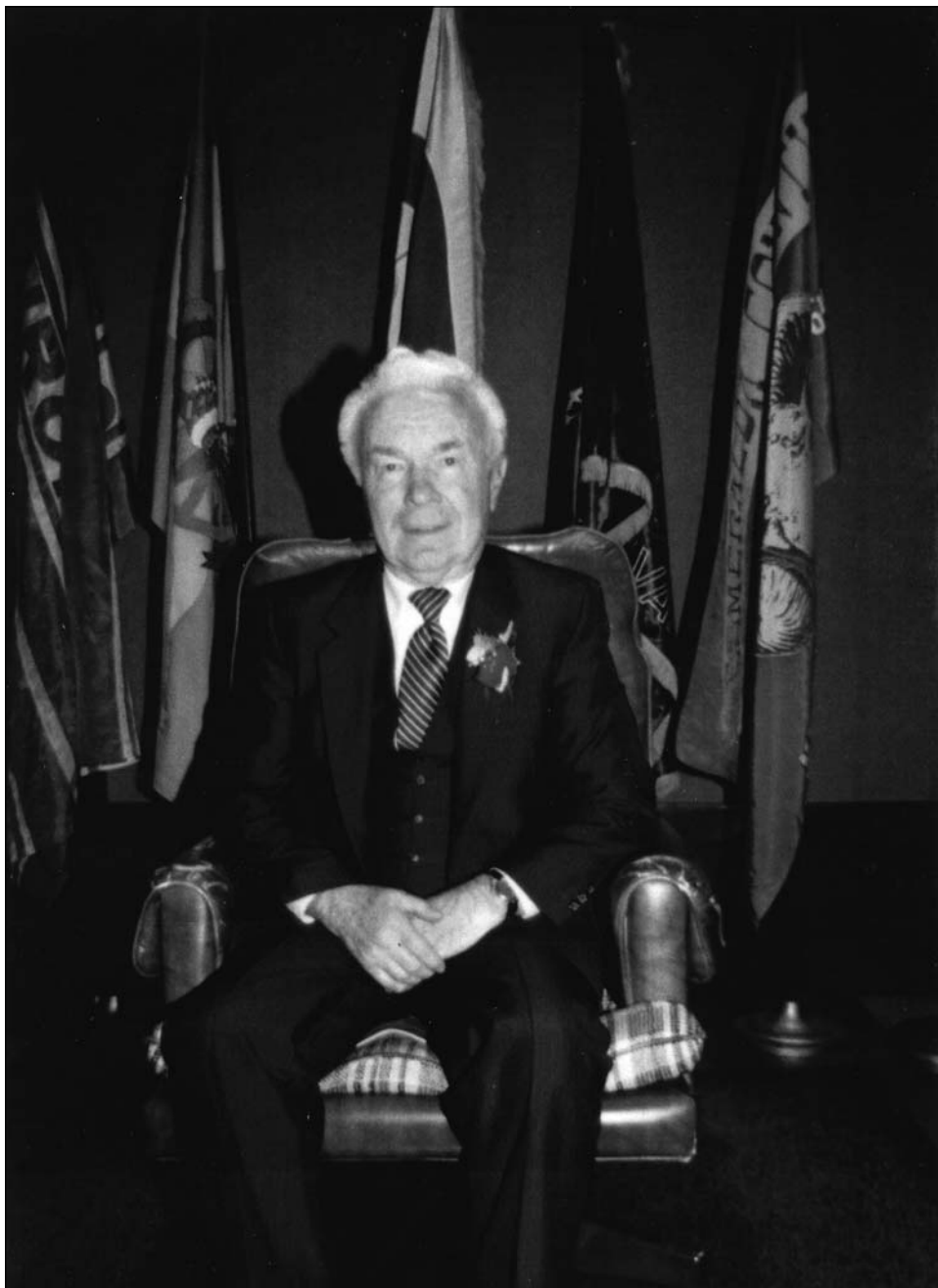
Well, you've added a lot of important information to the interview project, and I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for sharing your life with us.

Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

This is the end of the interview.

WILLIAM SWACKHAMER
PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



WILLIAM SWACKHAMER

(Original photograph provided by William Swackhamer)

WILLIAM SWACKHAMER

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William Swackhamer Interview

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BEULAH TESTOLIN**PREFACE**

Beulah Fowler Testolin, born in New Mexico in 1924, moved with her family to Fallon, Nevada when she was fourteen. Her father's brother and uncle were already here and the Newlands Project was flourishing by then. Her folks bought property and began ranching. Beulah helped with milking cows and pigs before school, feeding the animals and mowing hay, preparing her for ranch life with Tony.

Beulah first met Tony ice skating and they married in 1943. Their new life started on the Testolin Ranch in the little house where Tony was born. When his parents moved to town in 1947, they bought the ranch from them. They had two daughters, and moved into the bigger house. A few years later an offer came from a friend to buy a ranch in the Reese River Valley thirty-five miles from Austin. There was no school bus and Fallon schools had more to offer their daughters. They decided to buy the Reese River ranch, but kept the house in Churchill County. For eleven years

Beulah and their daughters spent nine months in Fallon, driving to Reese River Friday after school, and returning Sunday night.

Beulah helped with all the ranch work—the branding and the haying. She loved to ride horses and round up the cattle. She also loved to cook, and when friends, their families and buckaroos came to help with roundup and branding, she would cook for twenty-five people. They had enough beds in the house, shop and barns for all of them.

When it became more and more difficult to do all the heavy work, Beulah and Tony decided to sell the ranch and return to Fallon. Beulah wanted to return to the old neighborhood where they knew everybody and Tony decided they would build a new home, which is on Testolin Road, named after Tony's family.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project,

interviewing Beulah Testolin at her home at 4155 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is August 27, 1993.

Good morning, Beulah. I'm so pleased that you allowed us to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you tell us your full name, including your maiden name?

Beulah Testolin: Beulah May Fowler Testolin.

And where were you born and when?

At Elida, New Mexico, March 6, 1924.

When did you come to Nevada?

In 1938.

And what brought you here with your family?

Oh, what did bring me here? Well, they moved here to the farm, I guess, would be the reason.

How old were you when you moved here?

Fourteen.

Do you remember what it was like when you first moved here, and how you felt about it?

Well, a place to live! [laughs] Home. They were gonna farm, so that was our project at that time.

How many children in your family?

Six.

And where were you in that lineup?

I'm the oldest.

So how many kids were there when you first moved here?

All. We were all here. No, that's wrong. There's five because my brother was born here—youngest brother was born here in Fallon.

Do you remember what your folks heard about Fallon that brought them here? Were they still homesteading?

Well we came from New Mexico and went to Montana, and then we were there for a year and they came down here. My father's brother was here and uncle was here, and I think that's what inspired 'em to really move.

So they had heard about it. Was that about the time the irrigation was coming in from the Newlands Project?

Well, it was after that because I think the Newlands Project was finished in 1918 or somewhere along there. Somewhere along there.

But it was flourishing by then?

Right, right.

Did your folks buy the property or lease? And what part of Fallon?

They bought property. It was down on Norcutt Road.

Did you ranch along with the family?

Yes. We had cattle. We had to milk the cows in the morning 'fore we went to

school and feed the calves and the pigs and whatever and mow hay and do all those kind a things.

So you got experience for your later life?

Right.

When you came, were you in high school?

No, we were still in grade school and there was an Island School and we had to walk about three miles to school.

Oh, my. Did you adjust quickly to your new life here?

I think so. That's all we ever knew really, you know, was that type of thing.

When did you first meet Tony?

When we went ice skating in 1941, I think it was. In the winter we went ice skating.

Where?

A party of us over on Allen Road, I think's the name of the place.

How old were you then, about?

Oh, probably sixteen or older. Probably seventeen. Somewhere around there.

And were you kind of attracted to each other right away?

I think so.

Tell me how your friendship progressed until you married.

We started seeing each other for a year-and-a-half and then got married. [laughs]

What were some of the things you did together or with friends?

We ice skated and that type of thing and, you know, birthday parties and things like that.

Where did you get married?

At the Baptist Church in Fallon.

Do you know the date?

July 1, 1943.

And where was your first home together?

Right on the ranch—the little house where Tony was born. A little cabin—there's only part of it left now.

Was anyone here on the ranch at that time?

Yeah, his parents and his sister—two sisters.

Did you live with them?

No, we lived in the little cabin, and they lived in the old house.

Okay, so there was a cabin that's still here, and where was the other house that they lived in?

Just a few feet north.

Is that still there?

Still there.

Get pictures later?

Uh-huh, right, and also the old house is the office from Fairview that they had moved it in.

Now tell me what you mean by "from Fairview when they moved it in." What was Fairview?

Fairview was a mine east of here, and it was the office house of the Fairview and they moved it in and they made a home out of it.

In other words, Tony's parents bought it and that became their home?

Right.

Was that when they first came?

No, no, it was later. All the other children were born in the cabin except the youngest sister, and she was born in the new house.

So do you know about when they moved it, got that, approximately?

Not really.

That's okay.

The date on that I don't really know, because I didn't know them then.

How long did you live on the ranch with his family?

Well, we were there when we got married in 1943, and his parents moved to town in 1947, so we bought the ranch from them.

What was life like on the ranch with all the family?

It was nice. We all worked together: milked the cows and fed the pigs and raised turkeys and put eggs in the case.

So you did ranching here too, as well as housekeeping.

Right. [laughs]

So you had a real busy time in your early married years. Did you enjoy it?

Oh yeah, I loved the farm and the ranching. I love it.

When did you start having your children? You have two children?

Two children. Irene was born July 3, 1944, and Rachel was born January 26, 1947.

Where did you have your daughters? Was there a hospital here in Fallon?

Yes, there was a hospital in Fallon.

Was there good care?

Yeah, right. At least at that time it was very good care. [laughs]

You said his family moved into town and you bought the ranch. Did you move into the bigger house?

Yes, we did.

Then later, I know Tony told me a lot about those early years. Is there anything from your life here with the girls on the ranch that might be some different experiences than Tony had?

I don't know exactly what I would say. We moved to Reese River, then the girls, we were here on the ranch.

We're not gonna go to Reese River yet. Where did they go to school?

They went to school in Fallon and the bus picked 'em up right here at the ranch. And then also, I don't know if Tony told you, but Tony drove school bus, I drove school bus, and Rachel drove school bus.

When did you drive a school bus?

In 1941 probably.

Was this before or after you married?

Before.

What'd you get paid?

Twenty-seven dollars a month. [laughs]

That must have seemed like a lot?

It was. [laughs]

Were you out of school or still in high school?

Still goin' to high school.

So you would do it before class and after class?

Uh-huh, besides milkin' cows.

Besides your farming chores. So you both had similar kinds of backgrounds that made you compatible?

Right, that's right, I think so.

What kind of a wedding did you have?

Very simple. We didn't have a cake, we didn't have anything. We just got married and that was it. There was no reception, no nothin'. Just plain. Just simple.

Did you have time for any honeymoon?

No, we didn't.

Just came right here to the ranch?

No, they were haying at the time, so we waited and went out to the ranch we bought later. The cattle ranch we bought later. [laughs]

Did you have any family celebrations? Did your whole family when you lived here on the ranch, did they celebrate any of the holidays in any fashion? Did you have Thanksgiving or Christmas?

Yeah, we always had Christmas together.

And was there anything special about the family celebration?

Well, not exactly, we always had the neighbor who played Santa Claus for the girls. [laughs] That's about it I guess. Offhand I can't think of anything real, real outstanding.

Where did you do all your shopping? Did Fallon have any stores here?

Yeah. we did most all of it in Fallon—a little in Reno, but not too often. Unless you couldn't find it here, then wed go.

Did you use the catalogues too?

Yeah, right. We used the catalogues.

Now I just want to move quickly into the period when you and Tony then owned this ranch and house. Did you fix up that house at all that you took over from the Fairbanks?

No, I don't think so. We didn't do too much to that house.

When did you and Tony start talking about leaving this area for the Austin/Reese River area?

Well, Tony had leased some land and...

Here on your farm?

Over here across Harrigan Road. And an opportunity came that we could buy it.

Buy it? You mean...

Buy the piece of property we had leased here, right. And it was at the time right after the war and no one really had too much [laughs] and we debated whether we should buy that or...And then we had an opportunity to go to Grade A Dairy, and we didn't know if we really wanted to do that, and then this ranch thing came—this other Reese River ranch came up, so didn't really know which step to take.

Do you know what year about that was or the time period?

That would be about in the early fifties. Anyway, we didn't buy the ranch over here. We decided not to buy it and the next day, the fellow sold it for double the price he asked us for.

Oh my!

Can you believe that?! And then, we even had the choice between goin' in havin' a Grade A Dairy, 'cause at that time, you had to buy a quota...

What do you mean "had to buy a quota"?

The milk. You know, the milk production—so much...I can't remember exactly how they did that. But it was gallons or pounds of milk. And then the ranch came up out there. Well, we decided to take the ranch instead of milking cows, so that's what we did, not the Grade A Dairy.

Explain again what you mean about "quota of milk and butter." I don't understand.

I don't exactly understand all that either, but it's by gallons, and now I think they go by pounds instead of gallons of milk for quota.

A quota for whom?

For the dairy, for a Grade A Dairy. A Grade A Dairy has to have a quota of milk.

So if you had a dairy, you'd have that problem.

Right. You'd have that problem with a quota.

Now, had you been out to that area in the Austin Reese River Valley? Had you both been there visiting?

Right. We had been there, we had friends out there we visited.

About how often?

Not very often. Probably go fishin' in the summertime, or go hunting in the fall, was what we usually did.

So did you become interested and being toying with the idea of maybe you'd like to live there?

Well, not really I don't think, until the opportunity came and was offered to us, ya know. Then we started thinking about it, and with all these others at the same time. So we had to make a decision of what we were going to do, or stay here.

How long did it take you to make the decision? And was it a hard one?

Well, yes and no. The hard part was about the girls going to school, because we were thirty-five miles from Austin out there, and it was just far enough. There was no school bus and was just far enough that you had time to take 'em to school, come home, turn around and go back and get 'em. So that's why I had to make a decision what to do.

In other words, it wasn't like the earlier period when there were five kids or something and they were obligated to put in a school?

Not at that time, because there weren't enough families that had children in that vicinity right then, was the problem.

So then what was your decision?

Well, we decided then to go out. And then we kept the house here at the farm, and I stayed here for nine months and go to Reese River on Friday and come back Sunday night.

So the girls could go to school?

So they could go to school, and Fallon had more to offer for schooling than Austin had at the time.

That must have been a hard decision for both of you.

It was. For me, really hard. It was hard. [laughs]

Yes, I can see. How did the girls feel? How old were they then?

Well, I did it eleven years, so Rachel must have been goin' into second and Irene was—let's see, they're two years apart—goin' into fourth.

Did they feel sad not havin' Daddy around?

Well, it didn't seem to bother 'em that much.

You were probably the dominant one raising them.

Right, and one winter there was a drought at Reese River, and we spent the winter feeding the cattle—me and the two girls. [laughs] Get up in the morning, load the hay, [laughs] go feed the cows and they'd go to school. But you know I think that was one of the happiest winters they spent—bein' busy, I think.

Being helpful.

Uh-huh.

When you got the property out in Reese River, was it at a time of the year when you could be there a little bit before school started, or was it immediate separation?

Well, it was almost immediate, because Tony went out in November of 1954 and school was still on and we traveled back and forth—well, he traveled back and forth, and we didn't move out there until...What year did we move out there? Must have been the following year, but we didn't buy it until 1958, I know that.

How long a ride were the roads then?

It was exactly a hundred miles from here to...

A couple hours?

Two hours, right.

And what was the house there like on the property that you were buying?

It was a huge adobe house. It had six rooms in it, but there was no inside bathroom, there was no inside plumbing water. We packed all of our water with buckets [laughs], and that was one of the girls' chores—keep the buckets full of water.

How did you feel about that?

Well, I was used to that because in New Mexico, my father had homesteaded and we did the same thing. We packed the water up the hill and now too, it was up the hill. [laughs] It was similar to New Mexico.

You had your training.

Yeah, I had my training early.

How did you furnish that place so that you could here and he could stay there?

Well, very meekly. We had the necessities.

Brought up there?

Uh-huh, what had to be.

So that was kind of a hectic...

Well, you just planned everything: Mondays I washed clothes, Tuesdays I ironed [laughs], Wednesdays did the patchin', and Thursday I'd do my shopping, and then Fridays I'd cook to go to Reese River.

Oh, so you cooked here and brought the food up? It was easier to cook here with the water and things?

Uh-huh, especially with the evening meal, Friday night meal. Usually it was a big pot of soup and beef or chicken, and then I'd make my homemade noodles. [laughs]

It must have been a celebration Friday night, right? When you all were together?

Yeah, right. And then Tony always had plenty of work picked out for us to do for the weekend. [laughter]

Like his folks did with him.

Yeah, right.

So you had a long time to acclimate to actually living up there, because you lived more here.

Right, for the first eleven years.

That's a long, long time.

Yes it was.

And a long separation.

Right.

That was harder for Tony, wasn't it? to be up there alone?

Well, I don't know. I think he enjoys being alone by himself some. I really think he did. Of course he had his friends out there that visited and then different ones from here'd go visit. I think he enjoyed it. But I think he was always tickled to see us. [laughs]

Sure. So when did you finally move up there to stay?

Myself, I didn't go until 1965 when Rachel graduated from high school.

Had you leased out the land so you didn't have to do too much farming?

Right. We leased the land out so that it wasn't too hard for Tony, so he had to come back and do that, and that out there is too much. It's too far.

So in those eleven years while your girls were very busy in school, did you have time to get involved in the community in any way? I know you had a lot of things to do in the house, but did you have any outside activities?

Not too much, no. Just at school. School activities mostly, is what I had time for.

I want to back up a little bit 'cause some of the things that Tony shared, that I'll be sharing with Churchill County, was the period probably before you were married, but I want to know if on your family's ranch, did you have activity by

the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) doing work on the irrigation ditches here on this ranch where Tony met some of them?

No, because we were just a little later than that, just past the CCC.

So it was already...

Uh-huh, they were still in town but there wasn't any activity on our property there.

Did your property have the ditches that were already cemented? What kind of irrigation ditches?

They were just the dirt ditches down there where we were.

They didn't do much?

They hadn't done anything right there.

It wasn't part of the territory that they were improving?

Well, I'm not really sure about that part of it, because it was down by the government pasture there. I'm not sure if the CCC did any work right there or not. I'm sure there's a few of the large head boxes were.

But that was done before you came?

Yeah.

What kind of irrigation did your family do on their ranch when you were still at home?

Just the flood irrigating—ditch water from the Lahontan Dam.

Were they dirt ditches?

Yeah, right.

Was there a lot of evaporation?

Oh, I'm sure there probably was. 'Course then, we used to get more rain than we do now. [laughs] So I don't think we had as much evaporate—well, I'm sure there was evaporation but maybe not so much.

I want to bring you back now to your girls and Tony told me a little about them. What were their high school years like? Did they have a social life more than you had?

Oh, I think they had more of a social life than I had, but they went to all the school activities, the dances and whatever they had. And then they always volunteered their mother to bake cupcakes [laughs] or whatever needed to be done. And then we did the PTA and things like that.

Did they look forward to going out weekends to the Reese River?

Oh, I think they did.

Did they ever go into Austin?

No, not really that much. We were too far from town and they really didn't know the younger people there because we just buckarooed and did whatever. [laughs]

Did they have friends of the other ranchers in the Reese River area?

Well, the one friend Irene had, but she was going to school here also. I guess she lived here at the time, that's the way it was. She lived here at the time and then when she

got married, she lived at Reese River. But she used to come out and stay with us too, on the weekends. They'd bring their friends out, you know, and things.

When you went out before you moved out there, did you go into Austin at all?

Once in a while. Not too often. Usually we went fishin' [laughs] and camping. He was too busy. [laughs]

When you did first go into Austin, describe what it was like when you first saw it.

Well it's a small town. There's not too much activity there. It had its bars, and its one grocery store, Mr. Vigus. That was a great store. [laughs]

Did you get to know any of the people in Austin?

Oh yeah, we knew quite a few. Well, Tony already knew a lot of em, so I got introduced to a lot of the people. I really enjoyed them.

Did you make friends? Can you name any in the area that you socialized with or knew a little bit?

Well, as far as socializing, about the only thing we ever did was go to birthday parties and marriages, and weddings, you know, things like that.

Any special families that you did these things with?

Well Elizabeth and Louie Lani family, Anella...

What is that last name?

Lani.

Okay, I don't know them.

You don't know them? They had the Shell station at first.

Okay.

And Joe Streshley and Lee Streshley and his family, and Rene Maestretti and Joe Dory and the Ramoses, and oh, gosh, who else?

So you knew a lot.

And Stricklands and Madge Bertrand and Estelle [Shanks].

I've interviewed most of those people.

Well, let's see, I can't think of 'em offhand who else.

So you got to know a lot of people up there.

I knew quite a few of the people. Jerry Utter, and Friday Dalluge and their family.

So then when your girls graduated high school, I understand they went off to college.

Right.

Now then, that's when you moved permanently back?

That's when I moved permanently back.

What happened with the house? Did you just keep the house here so when you come into town?

No, we leased it out to the people that are there now, Gerald Alberson.

And tell me what your life was like then when you moved there permanently? Did you fix the house up a little bit?

Yeah. We fixed the house up a little and in 1968 we put in the bathroom. And a little before that, we put cupboards in the kitchen and water. [laughter] And what else did we do? That's pretty well about as much as we did, of course you always paint and fix up, you know—build in things.

So tell me what your life there with Tony was like and some of the changes in the first early years beside the house? What kind of ranching was going on?

Well, we had our cattle and we had to ship in the fall and I'd help him buckaroo. And in the springtime, why, we'd brand and move our cattle from one field to the other.

Did you do all those things too?

Uh-huh.

Did you do branding?

Yeah, I helped him brand. At first, he and I branded by ourselves. [laughs]

Was that when they were still using the hot branding iron?

Yeah, usually we branded when the calves were smaller, we could handle 'em then. He'd rope 'em and I'd throw 'em down and hold 'em. [laughs]

Do you have pictures of any of that?

I doubt it very much if we do.

That would be wonderful.

It would, but I doubt it because there was only two of us there.

That's right. And you wouldn't be marchin' around with a camera.

No. And we did all that, and I always helped him hay out in the field—you know, mowin' or rakin' or baling, or whatever.

Did your children come to visit much?

Oh yeah. That's one thing I've got to say about those girls. I gotta give 'em credit, they always come home every chance they got. That was really nice.

Well that's a credit to you.

It really is, it really is, and to this day it's still the same.

That's wonderful. I know that Tony was active in many things. Did you have any activities outside of this very busy ranching life?

Not too much. He was never one to go with crowds so we'd go to a rodeo once in a while or somethin' like that. Once in a while somethin' special we were invited.

Would you come back to Fallon to see your family?

Yes, we always came back here, most always Christmas. Once in a while, it would be Thanksgiving, but usually Christmas.

Because it wasn't so easy. What was the road like from here to there in winter?

In the wintertime it was icy. [laughs] If it was snowy, you know, it was bad.

Now when you were out there, because of the lack of medical care out that way, what did you do if you needed a doctor or didn't feel good?

Well, in 1957, I got sick and Tony called the doctor and he came out and spent the evening—the night—with me.

You're kidding?

Uh-uh, and take me all the way to Reno finally.

Well he must have cared a lot about you.

Yeah.

Was it kind of scary living where there wasn't close medical attention?

Well, kinda, but we were pretty healthy, so we didn't worry too much.

But what if there was an accident? What would you do if there was an accident?

Well, at the time our phones weren't too good, so we probably would have just loaded up and headed to Fallon.

Did you ever have to do that?

No, we never had to do that. Well, there's one time when we had buckaroos there and the guy got bucked off and we had to bring him to Fallon, but other than that, nothing.

Tell us about the buckaroos? Would you be hiring them to help with roundups or what?

It was all friends that came out and helped us gather the cattle—later on. At first, Tony and I did it all. And then later on, the buckaroos would come out and I would do the cooking.

Where'd they come from and who were they?

They were from Fallon, people we knew, friends we knew: Weaver Bryant. After Don Bruner moved from Fallon and went to Elko, well then he used to come from there. Then Gene Hanks moved from Fallon and moved to Current, and then he would come from Current to our place to buckaroo and brand.

Did you all do that for each other, or did you hire?

No, they just came to help. That was just for the fun part. [laughs] Vacation for them, I guess.

Okay, and they'd help with roundups?

Help with the roundup and the branding in the spring.

Oh, how many?

Oh gosh, I don't know. By the time they got them and their families there we probably had twenty-five people. [laughs]

Oh my gosh, where would they sleep?

Well, here and there and everywhere. [laughs] I had quite a few beds. When I came back, I never really thought about it while I

was out there, and when I counted up, I had fourteen beds. [laughs] We had 'em in the shop and in the house and just wherever.

In the barns?

Wherever, whatever. 'Course outside there, there was several little rooms outside. The way the ranch was set, the way it was built, I had beds in each one of those little rooms too, outside.

Outside? You mean...

Outside the house.

Outside the house, not attached to the house?

Well, kinda. The house was here like this and then the little buildings were all like this over here, and then there was another little room here.

Was that there when you bought it?

Yeah, right.

Did you have to cook for all these people?

Oh, yes.

How did you do that, and what did you cook?

Just roasts and stews and [laughs] whatever. Your dessert and your salad.

Did everyone help with dishes or clearing?

Some of 'em. Yeah, they'd help. They'd all pitch in and help, take the dishes to the sink.

Tell me what kind of cattle on your ranch, and did you sell any?

Yes, we had Hereford cattle and we only sold... Well, at first, we tried yearlings one time and then eventually, we went back to selling the calves, weaner calves.

And who did you sell them to? How did you sell them?

Well we sold 'em right at the ranch and weighed 'em right there and sold 'em right there.

You'd get word out and the buyers...

Yeah, we sold to the buyers—most of the time to one buyer for several years. And then somethin' would happen or they'd do somethin' different and wouldn't buy anymore or whatever, and then we'd sell to another buyer. So we sold to the same buyer.

The calves?

Yeah, calves, right.

I know that the stockyard here is the only one in the state. Did you ever bring cattle down here to Fallon to sell at the stockyard?

I shouldn't say this, but just the bad ones [laughs]—weren't too good, the sick ones or whatever. [laughs]

Why?

Well, we always sold out there and just sold everything straight across.

It was easier.

It was easier.

You made as much or more?

Yeah, made more we thought, and the trucks would come pick 'em up right at the ranch—we'd weigh 'em right there. It was nice.

Now you had the cattle. What else was part of your ranching, alfalfa hay?

Yeah, well eventually, we leveled and cleared off the brush of ninety acres, or ninety-one, and Tony and I cleared the brush off, and then I run the tractor to help level the ground and smooth it off, dust and all! [laughs]

Oh my! Amazing.

I worked outside a lot—all the time really.

What was your favorite part of the ranching? What did you like to do the most?

I loved to buckaroo. I liked that and I loved to cook, but a lot of times when the buckaroos came and I wasn't ridin' anymore, then I missed out on all the fun things that were goin' on. But I enjoyed the cooking.

Did you raise a lot of fresh vegetables?

We did have a garden, until just the last, I think about the last two or three years before we left we didn't have a garden anymore. But we raised beautiful cabbage, and carrots, and strawberries—oh they were good! But one morning I was pickin' strawberries, Tony and I, and I reached out to pick a strawberry and there was a big old rattlesnake.

Oh, no, you didn't get bitten did you?

No, he just ducked his head down. [laughs] He just ducked his head down.

And did you always like to ride horses?

Oh I loved to ride. I loved to ride.

*How long did you have horses to ride there?
How long did you ride?*

Oh, let's see, I rode...right up until pretty close to the end. Some—not a lot, but some.

And during the years you were there, did you see any changes at all in the area where you were ranching? Did people come and go? Did new people come?

There was a few, and the ranch below us sold several times.

Who would come in and buy?

Well, Mr. Gleason was from Chicago. And Tom Noonan came from Arizona, and then the Carona Farms were from California.

So it was an outside corporation?

Right, outsiders that came in.

How did the local people feel about that?

Well, I always think of the old, old tools. They thought it was terrible when all these local people come in, they didn't know what they were doin'. [laughs] I can always remember this one time Tony wanted to plant some tall wheat grass—crested wheat grass.

What kind of wheat grass?

The crested wheat. Anyway you know these fields of crested wheat you see around the countryside. And the old tools thought that was the most terrible thing there ever

was, plantin' that, gettin' rid of the sagebrush and that. I'll never forget that. And it wasn't too long, they were askin' for some too. [laughter] I'll never forget that. They thought it was terrible ruinin' all that sagebrush, that watershed. And then they were wantin' the crested wheat too, cause they saw how well the animals did on it. So they didn't have to travel so far for food.

And then Tony told me how he put in the water system? Did that make life a little more enjoyable?

Right, right. We had our little spring, and it only ran about three gallons to the minute. We had to carry the water to the house until we got a water system put in the house.

Were there any real hardship times, heavy winters, or any hardship times?

Not like they talked about before us. I can't really say we really ever were stuck out there or really a real hardship, because we always had our wood and our propane and it was always delivered on time and we always were warm.

And you both were so experienced from your childhood learning.

You're right.

*Did you ever leave there much to come here?
Where did you do your main marketing?*

In Fallon mostly.

Would you stay over?

Most of the time no.

Just come down?

Come down.

Would you visit?

Yeah, visit a little bit if we had time. And if we didn't, why...And then we got scolded quite a few times because we didn't visit enough. [laughs]

Where'd you buy your clothes?

Here in Fallon, or sometimes order out of the catalog, but mostly here in Fallon. Once in a while to Reno.

You lived there for quite a long time. When did you both start thinking you were going to leave that area to move?

It was probably six, seven years ago.

And what caused the decision to make some dramatic changes?

Well, we talked with the girls and everything, and our age...[laughs]

Your physical age?

Physical age, right, would be the thing that really made us make a decision.

To keep doing all that heavy work?

Yeah, I couldn't do all the heavy work and he couldn't either. His knees bothered him and my ankle bothered me. [laughs]

Was it kind of hard to start thinking of making a change?

Yes it was. We hadn't really planned on that part of it [laughs] when we went out

there. When you're young, you don't think of it.

How and when did you come to a decision then to sell there and make a change?

Let's see, we moved before 1991. It would be in 1987, somewhere in there. We had thought about it a little before, but then when we finally really made the decision, I think it was probably about 1988, somewhere in there. We had to do somethin', 'cause I had noticed before, I'd see Tony buckaroo in' and he'd get off and walk quite a bit. I thought to myself, that's strange he's doin' that. But he never was a complainer, ever. And I knew there had to be somethin' when I look back now, and it was his knees. He couldn't ride too long at a time. He had to get off and walk to relieve the pressure.

He didn't want to tell you.

No, uh-uh. He didn't want to say, so then one thing led to another until we finally decided to move—make the move, and it wasn't easy. [laughs]

No, no. And then this is such a beautiful home. Probably the nicest you've ever had.

Yeah, right.

Was that kind of exciting?

Well I was excited, yes and no. But when Tony said we were gonna build and he hadn't said a word to me before because we looked at all this property around town, cause he didn't think he wanted to live right here on account of the planes—the noise.

Oh, do you get that noise?

Yeah, we get the noise, but it isn't too bad right here because they take off and go over north there, and usually when they come around here, they're circling and going down, so they're not revin' up the motor and the noise isn't so bad. With the house the way it's built, it's not...

Can't hear anything.

I got the windows opened this morning. I didn't get 'em shut before you got here.

You heard them?

I could hear 'em. So anyway, that's one reason why I was kinda worried, because he didn't want to live here, and I kinda wanted to come back to this neighborhood 'cause we knew everybody, except a few new people, and I thought well, be with your friends and relatives and stuff would be really nice.

And your children are around.

Yeah, right. The grandchildren are around. And so we looked around, and then he said, "Well, we're buildin' a new home." Well, how do you know exactly what you want in nothin' flat? [laughs]

A new experience.

A new experience: was it! So we decided to go to—we didn't know a builder or anything—so we went to this builder and talked to him and he gave us kind of a plan and then I just take and rearranged it the way I wanted it. Well, I kinda had a little bit in mind what I wanted, but there's a few details that I missed, but we'll manage. [laughs]

Very, very, very nice. Do you still go back to your old area there over in the Reese River?

Yeah, well we went back and spent a little time when they went on vacation takin' care of things.

When who went on vacation?

Wayman and Judy.

Oh, the people who bought it.

The people who bought the ranch.

When you go back, is it with nostalgia? Do you miss it, or are you settled-in now in your new life?

Well, now we've kind of settled-in, but that first year was hard. [laughs]

Must have been hard.

It was really hard. But we're gettin' pretty well settled now. I just think, well, they bought it, it's theirs. Let them do what they want to do and not worry about it.

Sure. Did Tony's parents ever talk to you about their early years here on the ranch? Were they people who would share things that happened when they came?

Not really a lot, but a little, some. She always talked about raisin' all the turkeys and how they had to herd 'em out in the brush, would eat up the grasshoppers and the bugs and stuff. And let's see, what else did she tell me? And she told about when she came from the old country. Comin' in on the train to Hazen. Of course when Tony and I got married, they had chickens, and pigs and

turkeys and all that, so we just kinda stepped into their footsteps when they stepped out, and did that.

Did his father ever talk about what it was like when he first homesteaded here?

Well we didn't visit that much with him, 'cause he was older at the time. It was more her. And she told me about the vegetables they raised and they always used to haul the vegetables to Fairview and Rawhide and Wonder [Mines] to sell their vegetables and eggs and stuff that they raised, and that type of thing. And how they'd heat up bricks to keep their feet warm. Just things like that.

I forgot to ask Tony, do you know if when he was little, did they speak Italian in their home?

Yeah, they did. The girls, Marie and Katherine, and I think Ida, too—the three older ones—they went to school, there was a school down here on Wildes Road, and they couldn't speak English, and they had a struggle, and then the younger kids, they all spoke English. But they did have trouble when they went to school because they didn't speak English.

When you were there, were his parents speaking English as their main language?

Yeah, they speak English, but they'd speak Italian among themselves. So it worked out really nice.

Now is there anything—especially in the Reese River/Lander County pad—that you can share that I haven't asked you?

Well, I don't know for sure because well, just the thing that Tony worked so hard to

get telephone and electricity out there and he spent a lot of time—well both of us did really. And I'll never forget the one time, their old telephone didn't work in Reese River and it was my birthday and he had sent me to a sale to buy this calf. [laughs]

To buy a calf?

To buy a calf. [laughs] And we [laughs] had a flat tire just at Eastgate, and I had to change the tire.

You changed the tire too?

Oh yeah, uh-huh. Anyway, I let Irene, the oldest daughter, hold the calf while I changed the tire and we had an agreement between us, if I wasn't there by a certain time, he'd come looking. Well, I wasn't there, so he came looking and I met him on Elkhorn, the little pass comin' up over the hill there. [laughs] And he was upset. "I'm throwin' it all out," he said, "I'm throwin' it all out." I said, "What's the matter"? Well, he had cooked me a birthday dinner, fried chicken, made mashed potatoes. [laughs]

Oh, oh! And you couldn't call him because the phones didn't work.

No, 'cause the phone didn't work. And anyway, he said "Well, we'll go to Austin and eat." And I said, "No, Austin'll be closed by the time we get there. [laughs] We'll eat it." But you know, after that, he was always at home on time, or let me know if he was gonna be late for a meal. [laughs]

Oh, that's wonderful.

That was cute. And another nice thing was, we had Carol Station, you know, the old

highway where Fred and Rosie Stevens lived, and they always looked out for me too. If I wasn't there Friday night by the right time, they'd send somebody. [laughs]

Oh, because you had to travel...

Yeah, I traveled with the girls uh-huh, back and forth.

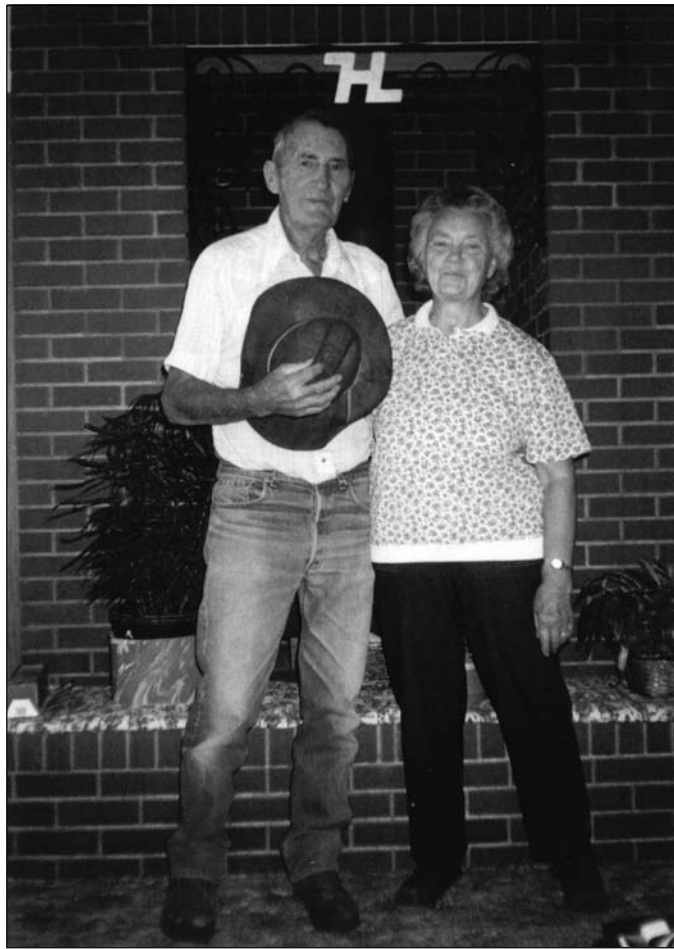
Do you have any photographs or articles or anything that reflects your life there?

We have some photographs, yeah.

We would appreciate later if you find any that we can copy for the project. It was a pleasure meeting you and Tony. I want to thank you on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project for sharing your experiences with us.

You're welcome. It was wonderful. Stop by anytime.

BEULAH TESTOLIN PHOTOGRAPHS



TONY AND BEULAH TESTOLIN, AUG. 27, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

BEULAH TESTOLIN

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TONY TESTOLIN**PREFACE**

Tony Testolin's father, born in Italy, got a job working on a ship. When he arrived on the East Coast of the United States, he defected. After working in the mines of Pennsylvania, he headed West. Hearing about the homestead opportunities during the progression of the Newlands Project, he went to Fallon, Nevada, homesteaded a ranch and sent back to Italy for Italia Binotto. They married and Tony, born February 28, 1918, was the fourth of seven children.

Tony describes their life growing up on the Testolin homestead in a three- room house with no electricity. The children shared in the chores, pumping water for the cattle, packing wood in the house and milking cows. Rural buses drove the children to school in Fallon on dirt and gravel roads. When Tony was a high school student, he drove the school bus earning sixteen dollars a month. Their recreation was swimming in the ditches, ice skating on the canals, fishing and hunting.

Tony describes the water rights and allotment of water from the Newlands Project and the irrigation methods. He tells about the several hundred young CCC men from all over the country who worked on the project, clearing and cementing ditches and says, "The CCC boys done more for this Project than anybody else at that time."

When Tony finished high school, he wanted to go to college to be a lawyer, but as the oldest boy in the family, felt an obligation to help on the ranch. He met Beulah Fowler at an ice-skating party. They married and lived on the Testolin Ranch, later purchasing it from his parents in 1950. They kept improving the house and the land. Tony and Beulah had two daughters, Irene and Rachel. A few years later a widowed friend who owned a ranch in Reese River Valley, Lander County, offered Tony the opportunity to lease the ranch with the option to buy. He always wanted a cattle ranch, and accepted. This started a new way of life for the family. Beulah and the girls stayed at the Testolin Ranch in Fallon so

the girls could continue school. They joined Tony at the Reese River Ranch on weekends. When their daughters completed high school, Beulah moved there permanently. One of Tony's major contributions to the Reese River Valley was his leadership in building a first-class 50-mile telephone line throughout that rural area. He tells about the Yomba Indian Reservation and how he worked with them to get them HUD housing.

After thirty-eight years, unable to do all the work, or hire anybody, they had to sell that ranch. They had a new house built on the old Testolin Ranch and moved back there in 1991. During these retirement years, Tony's poetic, creative talents have emerged. He hand carves windmills and animals, writes poetry, grows flower gardens, and reads every night. And he and Beulah frequently take off in their new car to enjoy the wildflowers and scenery and to go fishing.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander and Churchill Counties Oral History Projects, interviewing Tony Testolin at his home at 4155 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is August 27, 1993.

Good morning, Tony. I'm so pleased that you're allowing us to interview you for the Lander and Churchill Counties Oral History Projects. Would you tell us your full name?

Tony Testolin: Tony Paul Testolin.

And where were you born and when?

I was born in Fallon, Nevada, February 28, 1918.

Tell us your father's name and where he was born.

My father's name was Antonio Testolin, and he was born in Venice, Italy.

Do you know the date?

No, I can't recall that.

We can look that up [b. 1816, d. 1949]. What was your mother's name?

When she married, her name was Italia Testolin. It was Binotto.

When did your father come to the United States?

I wouldn't recall the exact date, because I don't know, but he did come to Fallon, Nevada, in 1906 or 1908, and he homesteaded the ranch that we're sifting on right now.

So that road is named after him, Testolin Road?

Yeah, it's named after him, I guess. chuckles] But I still carry the name—what's the difference?

chuckles] So now it's your road!

Yeah.

I don't know if your father told you much, but I want to find out what brought him to the United States.

Well, conditions over there, you know, was different from the United States. And I don't know whether I should tell all this or not, but he got a job working on a ship, and when he got to the East Coast, well chuckles] he defected,

let's face it—he left and they didn't catch him, and that's how he got to the United States.

Do you know how old he was?

I don't have no idea. You know, I'm not familiar with the history of the family too much.

I think that's on record from your sister. Okay, so he landed on the East Coast. Did he ever tell you what brought him to Nevada? Did he know anyone here?

Well, he worked in the mines in Pennsylvania for quite a bit—the coal mines. And then he came, as I recall, he came to Utah and was working there, and then broke his leg. And then he went to San Francisco, and he had a little market down there, if I'm right. And then he came to Lake Tahoe, and when the homestead opened here, well, he came to Fallon and homesteaded.

Was that after or during the progression of the Newlands Project?

Well, it was in the progression of it.

When they were advertising homesteads available?

They were advertising homesteads when he came. That's why he took up the land.

Did he come himself, or was he married by then?

He wasn't married then. And then he later sent back to Italy for my mother and got her passage over here and they were married.

So they knew each other in Italy?

They did know each other in Italy.

That's romantic! I'll ask more about that, if you know. Did your mother ever talk to you about how she felt when she first arrived?

Yeah. You know, it's coming out to a place with a one-room shack and everything else, and all bushes and everything, and you're coming from a lush country to a desert. You know how she felt! laughter] It don't take much to tell you that! laughter]

Too far to run home?

Yeah, that's about right! laughter]

Now how long after your father settled here, did the children start coming along?

Oh, let's see, my sister's going to be eighty-two, so I guess a year or so—couple of years.

How many brothers and sisters, and where are you in the lineup?

Well, let's see, there was seven of us all together: there was two boys and five sisters—one passed away when she was fifteen—and I'm fourth in the lineup, from the top.

And did you grow up through your teenage years here on this homestead?

Yes, I did. I grew up right here. Well, yeah, no place else to go! [laughter]

Tell me, from your earliest recollections, what your life here on the homestead was. I'm sure you had to start chores very early.

Yes, everybody had their job. You didn't have transportation to run downtown or

anything like that. Rich people rode bicycles to school, and that was about it—and the poor walked. But we always had a lot of chores to do, and each one was assigned his special job. And my sister and I, our job was to water the cattle. We had an old hand pump, and we had to pump water by hand. And we'd even count the strokes, so one wouldn't make any more strokes than the other one! You know, you don't want to do any more than your share! [laughter]

Now, which sister was this?

This is Ida, my sister in Sacramento.

Were you older or younger?

I was younger than her, two years.

Did she boss you around?

Oh yeah, they all bossed me around! I had three of em older than me, and I got bossed a lot, 'til I was big enough. to whip 'em! [laughter]

Now, who gave you these chores in such an organized way—your mother or your father?

They both did. They had it figured out, and that was our stuff to do. Then if I remember right, after I got my water pumped and everything, mi chore was to pack wood in the house. So I had to pack the wood in too. Yeah, you got up every morning early, and before you went to school, you done your chores. That's all there was to it.

How old were you when you started, do you remember?

Well, [chuckles] I can't remember, but I had to stand on a box to reach the pump handle.

I wish I had a picture of that!

Well, that's true I can show you the old pump up there yet. [laughs]

I'll take a picture of you at the pump after.
[laughs]

I think, if Jerry ain't taken it out, it's still there.

Tell me a little bit of your early recollections of what your house the living quarters, were like.

Well, I can remember living in a three-room house. There was one big bedroom, one big living room, and a small kitchen. And we had our bunk beds and everything. The kids slept separate, all of us. My brother and I slept together until we got to fightin' so bad, and then they had to separate us. [laughter] To be truthful, you know what brothers are like!

I hear that! Now, how were the meals handled? Did everyone eat together?

Everyone ate together. I don't care if it was a Depression or what, my mother and sisters would can, and we never had a hungry day.

That's wonderful. I bet your mom worked real, real hard too.

Yeah, baked bread, and then they butchered their own meat and made sausage, and we had chickens and pigs and cows. And they canned all the vegetables. We never had a hungry day in my life. I've never had a hungry day.

That's wonderful. Now, can you recall, did you have electricity during those early years?

We never had any electricity, and we finally got a telephone. Finally, the farmers got together, and they had to work and build their own line, and then that's when people got electricity in the rural areas.

Do you know, approximately, the time period?

It was in the late twenties sometime.

Tell me about the roads. Were they gravel or dirt?

They were all dirt. You never had a paved road in the rural areas. There just wasn't—they were all gravel.

Did you have horses to ride?

We had horses to ride, and we worked horses and horses alone, until about 1937 or 1938, we bought our first tractor.

Hm, that was late. Now, where did you go to school when you first started elementary?

I went to the old high school, as they called it, where the grade schools are now—you know, the preschoolers or whatever. And then I went to the Old Sparks School, and then I went to the high school.

How did you get to the elementary school when you were little?

Well, we had rural buses, and they picked you up out here. Well, we had to walk to the corner, because the bus wasn't gonna use any extra gas to go anyplace. You know what I mean? And then when I got in my last two years in high school, I drove bus.

And did you get paid?

Yeah, sixteen dollars a month. Made big money! [laughter]

When you got to be a teenager and starting high school, did you have time for any recreation?

No, we had to milk cows and everything. I wanted to take basketball, I wanted to take football, and it was out—you just had to keep the family a-goin'. That was part of it.

When you were in high school, did you start to make friends with some of the boys and girls from Fallon?

Oh yeah, I had a lot of friends at that time, I think. But the trouble is, you know, I graduated in 1936, and I was looking through my school yearbook the other day, and over half of us are gone.

Oh my!

It's unbelievable, that that many people have died in that time.

Yeah, that does sound like a high percentage. Did you ever have time to go to the dances?

No, I never did learn to dance. I'm "wopsided," being Italian. [chuckles]

Did you have any fun?

Oh yeah, we went swimmin', and ice skatin'—swimmin' in the summer and ice skatin' in the winter—that was our big deal. And then I hunted a lot and fished a lot—I loved to do that.

Who took you out on your first hunting and fishing excursions?

I guess I'd have to say my dad did.

So he occasionally would take a little time to be with you?

Oh yeah, he loved to hunt. I would follow him around when I was a little guy, and he'd shoot somethin', I'd go and retrieve it. In fact, I was a dog for a good many years until I was old enough to shoot my own game! [laughter]

What was the game?

Mostly pheasants, quail, and duck.

Is that the chukar?

We didn't have chukars in them years—they came later. And then every year he'd take a trip and we'd go to the hills and hunt sage hen.

Oh! And what kind of fish, and where did you fish?

Once or twice a year we'd take a trip, go east to the Reese River or someplace, and fish for the little trout.

Is that how you first became acquainted with the Reese River area?

Yes, that's the first time I ever seen it. And then later I deer hunted there, and then I met these people in the process of going out there and everything—and that's the people we bought the ranch from out there.

We'll get to that in more detail in just a little bit. Now, during the war years, were you still here?

Yeah, I was still here. I was to be drafted, and I was to leave the day after Christmas, and Roosevelt—you know, we were in agriculture—

and Roosevelt froze us all and they wouldn't take me no more.

Oh, okay, so you were able to stay here and help on the ranch yet.

Yeah. I'd passed all my physicals, had everything ready to go, and wanted to go then, but they wouldn't let us go.

I'll bet you're glad now you didn't?

No, not really.

You missed it?

Well, I don't know. Well, let me put it this way: I don't believe in war in the first place, but if it has to be...I think I would have enjoyed going.

So how did the war years affect your ranching and the economy?

Well, everything was, you know, rationed to us. We had coupons to get our gasoline—they gave us so many coupons. If you had a flat tire, you had to have a coupon to get that. And as far as shoes, I wore more shoes out than they'd allot me, and if it wasn't for other people helping me, I'd have had to go barefooted a lot of times.

So it really affected you. Was there any military base here yet?

No, that came later. That came right at the end of the war.

Now, I want to go back a little bit. Were you old enough to remember, or did your dad talk to you, how when they finally got the Newlands Project and the water started coming in, did

he ever talk about the effects of that, when you finally got that irrigation water?

Yeah.

Tell me what you can remember.

Well, see, they were building a dam when my mother and father was here. And he started leveling a little ground at a time, you know, with horses then. You didn't have big equipment—you took a small parcel at a time. And what he did, he started raising vegetables, and before my mother got here, I can remember him tellin' that he'd raise certain vegetables—say radishes or green onions or beets or somethin'—a little plot of 'em—and he would carry 'em to Fallon on his back and sell 'em, buy what he wanted, and come back.

Oh my!

He didn't have a horse and buggy. He just had a work horse, you know. Well, he didn't have a buggy, let's face it.

He still didn't have much money. Did he talk about the water and how they rationed how much you got and who dug the ditches around your property?

Well, the government done all that, but they hired people, and all these ditches, most all of them was dug with a team and a fresno scraper. And I can remember my mother saying this: When they were building the dam up there, they had a big patch of cabbage, and they made, if I recall, over thirty barrels of sauerkraut and sold to the people workin' at the dam.

Oh my!

You can imagine how many cabbages it took to make fifty-five gallons of sauerkraut!

And how many people were working at the dam? Did they ever talk about it?

No, they didn't, but I met people that had worked at the dam, and there was a lot of people there. In fact, one of my best friends was a blacksmith at Lahontan Dam. And I don't know, you can take this for what it's worth, but he said at that time, they'd block the water off so they could work, and he said they'd catch them Lahontan Cut-throats [fish] that could be up to twenty-five, thirty pounds—pick 'em out of there with their hands, out of the Carson River. And that's hard for us now to think that they were there.

Uh-huh. When the water started to come, was there a rationing system, that you each got so much water allotted?

Yeah. When you bought your water right you was allowed, what is it? 3.2 or 3.6 acre feet per acre. Everybody had an allotment, as you have today. And the benchlands got over 4 acre foot per acre. But see, this is bottomland, as they called it—it's not benchland—and I think we were 3.6.

How many acres on this homestead?

Well, when he homesteaded it, he took up a hundred and twenty acres, but Beulah and I have bought eighty acres since that. But we've bought brushland to keep people from building next to us.

Do you get water rights or water allotment for it?

Well, not for a lot of that land we didn't. We've got eighty-five acres of water rights is what we have.

Do you have to buy those water rights?

Oh yes, you buy 'em.

What do you pay for those?

Well, at the time the Project was built, I think it was fifty-five dollars an acre. But now, you can't buy 'em any more, unless you buy somebody else's water right. Let's face it, you know, they're not allotting any new water rights. But say I'm selling this place, well, the water rights go with it. In other words, a water right is a property right, any way you look at it—it has to be.

So if you're buying a ranch, you buy the water rights.

That's right.

And there's no other way to get the ranches now, right, except to buy them from someone.

That's the only way to get it. The Homestead Law has been shut down, you know, for years and years. You cannot homestead any more.

Were there years in those early years when there were problems where there wasn't enough water? Did the Project produce enough water for all the ranchers?

You had drought periods then, just like now. I can remember in, I think it was 1935 and 1936, right in there—or 1931, right in there, when Lahontan Dam went completely dry, and all the fish died up there. My folks had a lot of truck garden, and I can remember we had an acre of celery or something, and other truck garden, and we bought a pump from the neighbors up here—I think their name was Milton—a centrifugal six-inch

pump, and our friend Billy Cislini at lone brought us down a motor, and we pumped water out of the drain ditch to keep our vegetables going. And you know, we still made our crop. But that's the way we survived that year. It'd have been a disaster if we couldn't have irrigated. The water was shut off in July. You know, alfalfa and that, well, it'll revive the next year. But when you got a truck garden, and it's just gettin' ready to produce and you shut the water off, you're dead!

Oh my! I want as much as I can get on the Lahontan Dam Project, because that part I'll share with Churchill County. That's a major project they're doing. Do you remember when the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) fellahs came in to cement the ditches?

Yes, I do.

Tell as much as you can about that.

Well, I remember 'em real well because we were still in the truck garden, and my father was sellin' produce to 'em.

Where did they live, where were they housed?

They were housed in Fallon there, right by the railroad tracks, someplace in there. I don't remember exactly, but it was right in there.

Were they like trailers, or barracks?

They built barracks. I felt sorry for 'em in a lot of ways. They didn't have nothin' for 'em to do. They'd put 'em in these drain ditches, pulling cattails and tules, and they were up to their waists in water. You know, I thought a lot of it wasn't fair, but the CC boys did a lot of good for this Project. I don't care, they built a lot of cement structures, and they cleaned ditches. I'll

always say that the CC boys done more for this Project than anybody else at that time.

Do you know about how many there were, in general? Do you know how long they stayed to work on it?

Well, when did the war break out? They were in here in 1936.

That was, I think, in 1941.

Yeah, well, until the war broke out, we had CC boys in here. When did they come in? In 1936, 1937, I think, wasn't it? In 1937 or 1938, I'd say. And all this riprapping you see around these cement boxes here, these drop boxes—they hauled rocks from the hills out there and they ripped all these boxes.

Do you have any idea of how many? Fifty? A hundred? Five hundred? Do you have any idea?

There's maybe three or four hundred at the most. And they hired people to take a group of 'em—say fifteen or twenty—and they done this job. And another foreman took 'em and done this job. And then they had their... They were just like military: they had their captains and everything else to oversee 'em. They weren't allowed to, you know, run around. They could go downtown and have a good time or anything, but they had to be back at a certain time, just like being in the military. And we became acquainted with quite a few of them, and they were good people. They were hungry, that's all. Let's face it, they couldn't find a job like people today.

It was Depression years.

It was during the Depression. You know, the Depression and whatever in 1936 and that, was terrible. Well, see, it started in 1929, but

in 1936, you was still in a Depression, you hadn't got over it.

Were there a mixture of ethnic groups in these? Were there blacks and Mexicans and Caucasian in a mixture?

That's right, there was.

And you said you got acquainted with a few of them. How did you do that? In town? Or while they were working you chatted with them?

While they were workin', and then when we would deliver vegetables over there. You know, some of 'em was cooks. And they'd ask you if they could come out, and they were willing to work for nuthin'. And if you gave 'em a home-cooked meal, boy, that was the biggest thing in their life, you know.

Did you ever have any in for a home-cooked meal?

Yes, we did. In fact, we had one guy that was studying to be a barber, and I can remember he used to cut my hair all the time for nuthin', you know, just for practice.

Where was he from?

He was from Chicago, Illinois.

So they came from all over?

They came from all over: Tennessee, all over. In fact, one of my very best friends I have today was in the CC camp, and he's in Michigan now, and we still visit each other and correspond.

Oh, how nice! So you met him when he was here working?

When he was here.

Now, do you know if any of them liked it and found jobs and stayed in the area?

Lots of 'em stayed, like Cecil Cheek and then the guy that ran Consolidated Warehouse. There's quite a few of 'em stayed. Larry Goon was one of 'em. God, I'd have to sit down and think it out before I could name very many of 'em. And they married here and raised families—and in fact, they were business people, just like anybody else. They did stay.

Before we leave the Lahontan Dam and the irrigation, I need to pick your brain as much as I can. From the time of the ditches, did the water allotment change, or did anything change with the way you irrigated?

No, it really didn't, but the people went to using tractors, and then they had mechanical equipment to level their land, and they irrigated in less time. You know, you just went to better equipment. But as far as your water allotment, it's the same today as it was then.

Now, for people like me who have never lived on a farm, when you say the irrigation changed, describe the early method of irrigation, and then the kind of irrigation that it progressed to—the method of irrigation.

Well, at first you was irrigating, you know, if you was lucky, you had redwood boxes, headgates to turn your water out on your checks. Checks were real narrow, you know, and as you got your farm equipment better and everything... We used to level this ground with fresno scrapers and tailboard scrapers, with six, eight, ten, twelve horses, or whatever the size of the equipment. But as the years

progressed, they come back with tractors, and then you leveled your land better. So then you extended the width of your checks, so you'd irrigate more land between your levies. And then as time went on, better and better equipment, we come to modern-day laser equipment now, that everything is done mechanically. You set your seeing eye out in the middle of the field, the driver runs around with the tractor, and that mechanically picks up the dirt and dumps it wherever it's gotta be, and you get a beautiful job of levelin'. And now they make checks that are three, four, five hundred feet wide.

What's "checks"?

Well, let's look right out here in this field. See them levies there? In between them, we always called 'em checks, is what we called em.

Okay. Is that C-H-E-C-K-S?

Uh-huh, just like you're spending your money. [laughter] But there's a good example right there, you can see it right out of the window. See?

I'll go take a picture. You'll go with me to take some pictures after, to illustrate?

Yeah.

Fine. Alright, so now, did you finish high school?

Yeah, I finished high school. I graduated in 1936. And like I say, looking through the yearbook, it's just amazing how many people are not left. In fact, I went to the fifty-plus reunion here about four or five years ago, and I would never go back again, because

everybody there was old people! [laughter]
They were!

You didn't recognize them?

Yeah, I recognized them, but everybody's old!

The girls weren't cute any more?

No. A lot of 'em are misshapen and everything. They weren't like they used to look, I'll tell you that! I don't think the men looked like they used to look either; but I ain't gonna say that. I shouldn't say that part.

Well, we won't name names. Now, when did you meet Beulah?

Gee whiz!

Was it here in Fallon?

Yeah, it was here in Fallon. She's from New Mexico, and went on an ice skating party, is the way I met her.

When, do you remember? In high school?

She was in high school, and I had graduated. But anyway, I went on an ice skating party, and I met her there, and from there on we hit it off. We runned around together, I don't know, one or two years, and finally decided to get married, and here we are!

I'll be interviewing her, so I'll find out more about it.

She knows dates and I don't, because I don't keep that stuff. Dates don't mean nuthin' to me.

That's fine. So when you finished high school and apparently you were here a couple more years and you married Beulah, did you ranch after high school, working on the ranch here?

Well, to tell you the truth, I wanted to go to college. My father's health was so bad, and I was the oldest boy in the family, and I figured, "Well, I'd better help my folks." So I stayed home instead of going to college. I wanted to be a lawyer, if you want to know the truth, but I'd have probably made a poor one anyway. But anyway, I stayed home, and then after her and I got married, we bought this place from my parents [in April of 1950].

Where did your parents go after you bought it?

They moved to Fallon, in town.

Did they buy a house or rent a house?

Well, my sister bought a house, and they lived...See, Catherine never did get married. They moved to town. My sister lived with em, my mother done the cookin' and she worked and my dad was old and he couldn't do anything any more, and then he passed away. And then my mother lived quite a lot longer than that. First they rented a house—that's right—and then they bought a house where Catherine's livin' today. They bought that house.

Okay, so then you and Beulah were running the ranch, and you bought the house too.

We bought everything, yeah.

Now the house that you grew up in, did they ever change it or improve it, or was it the same?

They improved it.

So now, tell me how long did you and Beulah stay here?

Well, we stayed quite a while. I left in 1954 or something. But we did start improving things, you know. As time went on, everybody, their land and everything, you just kept improvin'. I don't remember my years too good.

That's okay. When did you start to have your family of children? How long after you were married?

Well, a year.

And who was your first child?

Irene. Then three years later we had Rachel, and that was it.

Uh-huh, two girls. Did they ranch with you?

Yes, they stayed with us. And then when we moved to Austin—or Reese River, as you call it—well, they were in school here, and the schools out there wasn't too good, and we had no school bus out there. We'd have had to drive about thirty-five miles, one way, and Beulah would have had to go back and forth to school. We leased this place out and kept the house, and she lived here for eleven years while I lived out there.

So the kids could go to school here?

So they got better school.

I've done many interviews, I've heard a lot of stories the same way. Okay, so let's keep you here a little bit. When your children were born—I'll ask Beulah more—but was there medical care here in Fallon?

Yes, there was.

Did you see many changes in Fallon over that time period from the thirties to about the fifties?

Well, see, your base came in and expanded, and as it went on you got more casinos, and you got Haley's and Safeway finally came to town. At first we didn't—outside of I.H. Kent and a Piggly Wiggly Store is about all we had, you know, and J.C. Penney. And we had the Fallon Mercantile, and that was it. You didn't have these little stores around. And as time went on, well, the more people, more supermarkets, and that's it.

When the military came in, is that what brought the most new people in, with the contractors and military?

Yeah, they brought 'em in. They started it, and when they started it, well then you gotta build more schools, you gotta build more everything. This tourism, they holler about gettin' more people in your tax base will help your tax base—it don't help you a bit! Because the more people you get, the more demands they have: they want this, they want that, they want swimming pools. People vote a library down, they build it anyway. They vote a hospital down, and they build it anyway. So what the hell is the use of votin'?

Now, I want to ask a little about this, because I'm a Californian, out where we have very, very high taxes. I know a lot of Californians are fleeing California, many coming to Nevada. What is the tax structure here in this area, as far as state taxes and property taxes, do you know?

Well, I don't know how it's allotted per dollar, who gets the most of it or anything. But

your taxes just continually go up. This year, I don't know. Beulah would know exactly how much they went up. But that's what I say, the more people, the more they demand, and the more of everything.

And the land values go up.

The land values go up. You can sell sagebrush. They're selling a lot of this stupid old alkali ground, an acre at a time, for \$20,000, that you can't even raise an umbrella on! [laughter] You know what I mean? What the heck good [is it]? I wouldn't buy it!

Did you notice over the years, where you'd go in town, there'd be a lot of strangers, where before you knew people?

That's right. Now when we go to town... Well, see, we were gone for the thirty-eight years, and we came to town—well, we knew the original people here, but now when I go to town, I'm lucky if I know five or six people. But we don't go to town that often. I hate towns, let's face it!

Okay, so you stayed here until around the fifties. I want to go back, you said you first went hunting and fishing. What made you decide to move away from this ranch?

Well, these people were old out there on that ranch out at Reese River, and her husband had died, and she was widowed, and I went out there and helped her quite a bit—I felt sorry for her. And so we negotiated and I bought the ranch from her, and I paid for it a period of time. I had to mortgage this place—I paid my folks off first. So I mortgaged this place to go out there and buy that, but we paid it all off. In fact, we don't owe anybody a dime.

I want to go back a little bit. You said you met these people. Who were they, where did you meet them, and over what period of time were you going out there?

Well, Jim and Irene Hayden. They came down here one time and sold my folks some pigs. They had some pigs they wanted to get rid of, and they stopped here and sold 'em when they came to Fallon, and that's where I met 'em. And they invited me out to go deer huntin', and through that, well, that's where we got acquainted. After Jim passed away, I went out and I'd help Irene do this and that and everything else. She was going to sell the place, and I asked her for a chance at it, and she said, "Okay," and that's the way we bought the place.

Now, was the reason you asked her about the price, because you were liking that area so much?

I loved that area. I still do but age took care of everything.

I'll be asking Beulah, but was she also getting to like that area more than here?

Well, I can't really answer that.

I'll ask her.

Yeah, you'd better. I might not want to hear the answer, either!

[chuckles] I won't let you listen to it! Okay, so how many years passed between the time you met this couple, her husband died, and you finally decided you were going to buy it?

I would say ten or twelve years.

Oh, so you weren't rushing into something.

No, it wasn't a year or two, it was a long time. I knew 'em for a long time.

This is a second interview session with Tony Testolin, March 19, 1995, at his home at 4155 Testolin Road, Fallon, Nevada.

Good morning, Tony. I'm glad that we could have a second session to complete the interview. I want to return to your youth briefly. You told us about the fun you had swimming and ice skating, but I forgot to ask you, first of all, where did you swim?

Well, them days, the canals wasn't polluted or anything, and we swam in every canal in the valley, every dam that we could find—everyplace! In fact, we climbed up on top of trees and dove off into the water. Why we didn't kill each other, I don't know, but we didn't.

It sounds like fun! I wonder if there are any pictures of that?

No. We were too poor to have cameras, you know.

Oh yes. Now, when you swam, was that water all from the ditches from the Newlands Project?

That's right, it's all water in the canals, from the Lahontan Dam.

About how many kids would there be doing all this?

Oh, sometimes ten, fifteen—it depended on who could get away.

Now, I've often read, not in Fallon, but other places, where children would drown. Did any kids drown in these ditches?

No, not that I can recall. There was one or two accidents. You know, people got hurt diving in concrete structures and stuff like that. But as far as drowning, no, we never drowned.

You also mentioned ice skating, and you met Beulah ice skating. Tell me about where you went ice skating.

Well, any place we could find ice on ponds, canals, we would walk miles to skate, because we didn't have cars to travel with. I met Beulah there, skating. And I don't know, that was our... We didn't have money to go to theaters and that, so that's what we did. We entertained ourselves, that's about it.

That sounds like fun. What kind of skates did you use?

Well, at first we had clamp-on skates that always fell off, and finally we got wealthy enough that we bought shoe skates. One year the theater in Fallon burned down, and for six weeks we skated on Rattlesnake Reservoir every night, and there was old people up into their sixties and seventies, out there ice skating. And people that would never talk to you on the street would talk to you while you was ice skating—everybody was your friend.

Oh, that sounds wonderful. Did they build fires?

We had fires, and then we roasted wienies and had marshmallows with it. And everybody—well, we just had a good time.

That sounds wonderful! And all ages, hm?

That's right. I can remember the editor of the *Fallon Standard* at the time, Claude Smith,

he was out there just skatin' away just as hard as he could go. And then the Mills family was quite the ice skaters. And everybody was friendly and had a good time.

That sounds wonderful. It's a shame that kids don't have that kind of experience today.

No. Well, we didn't have no money. We had to entertain ourselves the best we could.

Uh-huh, but in such a wholesome way. You said you met Beulah over a period of time. Was she one of the gang ice skating?

Well, yes, she was. We met [laughs] on this ice skating party. Anyway, I met her over there, and I don't know, we got going out together. In fact, I wrote a poem about her, if you want to know the truth.

Oh, I want to see some of your poems after! Now, another thing I failed to ask you in your first interview, I know that your family came from Italy: Was Italian spoken in your home when you were a child?

Yes, it was. After the kids started to go to school, well, it wasn't spoken any more. Both my parents started speaking English to us, and it was always English. In fact, I know very little Italian that I can speak today.

So they spoke in English to each other, as well, when they learned?

That's right.

That's interesting. And did your parents retain any of the customs from Italy?

Well, not really too much. I can't say as that they did—mostly in what we ate, I would

say. They ate their pasta and stuff like that, but they didn't retain too many customs.

They became Americanized very quickly?

Yeah. Well, my father wasn't over here very long and he became an American citizen. And then when my mother came over, well, she automatically, I guess, became an American citizen because she married him.

Were they religious?

Yeah, they were both Catholics, and us kids was told that if we wanted to go to church, to pick out any church we wanted and they wouldn't complain about it. Some of us went to church, and some of us haven't. I'm one that didn't, I guess.

So they were pretty liberal about it.

They were really liberal about religion, and they didn't force it upon us. It was up to us to decide what we wanted.

That's kind of unusual, isn't it, for that period?

Well, maybe they were more open-minded—I don't know what to say.

Sounds like it. Did they maintain communication with the relatives in Italy? Or did any ever visit?

Very little. My father did, with his one sister. I just can't recall that they did very much. He used to send money over there to his sister—she was a cripple or something. And they'd receive news once in a while, back and forth, about the relatives.

Now, did you ever get over to Italy?

No. The only foreign country I've been to was Canada last fall.

I know when I wanted to get the second interview, you were going on up to Alaska.

Yeah, well, we didn't get there. Maybe this year—who knows! We don't know what we're doin'!

Now, I want to go back now to the early years of your marriage in 1943, until you bought the ranch and house from your folks in 1950. So first I want to ask you when you married, where did you and Beulah live?

Well, we lived in a three-room cabin right here on the place in Fallon.

Okay, so you came to your family's ranch?

Yes, and then we bought the ranch and they moved to town. And then we moved over in the big house, until we moved away. And then when I bought the place in Reese River, I moved out there, but Beulah remained in Fallon for eleven years. She didn't actually move out—she just came out at weekends and in summer. We kept the kids in Fallon schools.

I want to stay in the early years when you were first married, before you bought the place from your folks—those earliest years—because I want to find out what the ranch was like and what your work here on the ranch was, before 1950, before you bought it, while your dad was still alive, when you both lived in the smaller house here on the ranch. What was the ranch like then?

Well, what we did, it was diversified. We raised, oh, chickens and turkeys and pigs and we had a few sheep. We had a dairy where we

milked cows. In fact, I even leased more land so there would be enough income for all of us.

Did you have specific areas of responsibility? How many of you were working the ranch in those years when you were first married, before you bought it and it was yours. How many workers were there?

Well, it would be me and Beulah and my mother, probably.

While your dad was still alive?

Yes, but my dad was in poor health, and he couldn't work any more.

Did you hire any workers when you needed more? Did you hire any Indians or workers?

Well, what we did, we traded work. Like I'd go help somebody hay, and they'd help us. That's the way the whole neighborhood or the valley worked that way. We would pool our machinery with somebody else. But we always had to go out and hire a certain amount of people to get the haying done.

Uh-huh, and who would you hire?

Well, them times, you know, there was transients coming through, and we'd go downtown, and heck, in nothin' flat you could pick up a hay crew. [laughter]

And they would just come be day workers?

That's right, they were just day workers. And they would travel through the country. They'd hit it here for hayin', and then they'd go to another place for a different harvest. And the same people would come back every

year, and they'd call us and say, "Well, we're in town," or somethin', "could I see you?" They might want ten dollars to get 'em by until we were ready to start hayin', and we would give 'em the money, and they would come until the job was done.

So you worked real hard.

That's right.

I think we've pretty well covered the years here in Fallon, so now I want to find out from you about your decision to get the ranch in Reese River Valley in Lander County. Tell me in detail about that dramatic move.

Well, I don't know, all my life all I wanted was to own a cow ranch, and I got a chance to buy this ranch from this widowed woman. And so we went out and tried it out, and I took a lease on it for three years, and then with the option to buy, and then we bought the place. Whatever the place was, we paid it off at a yearly rate, is the way we did it. And we finally got it all paid off.

Describe what it was like when you first leased it. What was the valley like, and the ranch?

There was about two hundred and some acres of grass hay out there, and a hundred and fifty head of Hereford cattle, and a couple of horses was thrown in on the lease. Let me see here, I gotta think a minute. And some farm machinery to put the hay up, and that kind of stuff. And that's about all there was, but there was fourteen hundred deeded acres of ground out there, that was second- and third-class pasture that we used. Plus, they had a BLM (Bureau of Land Management) permit and a Forest permit for three hundred head of cattle.

And how many head of cattle was there when you got it?

There was about a hundred and fifty head of cows there, and we built it up to a full permit of three hundred head.

Oh my goodness! And was there a house there that went with it?

There was a house and barn and some buildings, a chicken house and a few buildings: blacksmith shop and a two-car garage.

A lot.

The old house was made of adobe. The walls were, oh, maybe fourteen to sixteen inches thick, and it was easy to heat. It was a big house: it had six rooms. It was easy to heat, and it was cool in the summertime.

Where were the nearest neighbors?

The nearest neighbor was about two-and-a-half miles to the south of the ranch, and it was a couple of old bachelors that lived there—real nice people.

About how many people lived there in that valley when you were there? About how many families or ranches?

Oh, there was an Indian reservation above this area—Yomba Indian Reservation, and they had twenty-one families if I recall right. Then as far as the whites, as far down to Austin there was about, oh, four families was all.

How far were you from Austin?

Thirty-four miles south of Austin.

That's quite a distance. Was there any electricity?

There was no electricity. We had a one-wire telephone line that worked sometimes, and sometimes it didn't work—most of the time it didn't work. Most of the time if you had an important call to make, you had to drive to Austin or to Gabbs—one way or the other.

Now, how were the roads out of there?

The roads were all gravel roads, and they were washboard, you know. And in the summer they were pretty good, but in the wintertime the snow would hit 'em and then...Well, the roads weren't good.

So you were kind of isolated.

Yeah, but it was nice to be isolated, away from everybody. In fact, I didn't care if we ever had a phone, but you know, I was second in command.

What did you do for irrigation? Where'd the water come from?

We had a permit out of Tierney Creek that dated back to 1864. And we had a permit out of Cottonwood and San Juan that dated back to 1868. And we had the first water rights on both creeks, so water was no problem.

There weren't a lot of neighbors, but again, did you help each other?

Yeah, somewhat, when brandin' come along, or you know, some big job to do, well, we helped each other. But as far as haying, we all done our own haying. It was all done

with tractors and buckrakes, and the hay was stacked loose until later years we went to balm' hay with bale wagons. You know, we modernized a little bit.

Now, you mentioned, and Beulah in her interview also mentioned that when you made the move, because of the schools and being so isolated, she and the children stayed here, except for weekends. Did you get back here to Fallon at all? Or was it mainly they came to you?

Well, I'd come back. We'd haul our own gasoline and stuff like that. I'd come to Fallon every so often. I needed a haircut once in a while, you know! I didn't want to look like a cave man or something like that.

Now, did you get into Austin very much?

Not too much. Austin didn't have anything as far as buying parts, or grocery store. Well, there was no reason to go there, hardly, unless you had a reason—then you went.

So then Beulah and the children came weekends. Would they bring you supplies that you needed?

Oh yeah, they'd bring the groceries out, and then I'd call in if I needed something, and they'd bring it out.

But basically you were there alone?

Yeah, I was there most of the time all by myself. I consider myself one of the best cooks there are, because I lived eleven years cookin' for myself and I didn't poison myself.

And you didn't just open a can, obviously.

And I didn't die, so I must be a pretty good cook! [laughter]

Now, I want to find out—describe to me when you were out there, what your days were like. What took up most of your time on that kind of a place?

Well, most of time was taken up by takin' care of cattle, because in the wintertime, in the spring, fall, you had to feed cattle. I fed cattle all by myself. Then in the spring you went into calving, and it occupied all your—you didn't have time to goof off. And if I had extra time, I would go trappin' coyotes and bobcats and beaver and stuff for extra money.

Oh my goodness!

In fact, I trapped enough bobcats and coyotes one winter to buy me a gooseneck, all—aluminum cow trailer—believe that or not.

Oh my gosh! Now, what did you do, skin and sell. .

Yeah, we'd skin and sell the hides.

Who would you sell it to?

Well, I'd sell to wherever I thought I was going to get the most money. I'd ship 'em to different places.

So you were innovative and found out where the markets were?

Yeah, I watched the markets. We always got...Oh, they'd send us their market quotations and everything, and I'd just watch and whatever I thought was the best, I'd ship to them.

You were pretty smart! I bet it was hard to get to a post office! [chuckles]

Yeah, but you could wrap your hides up tight and everything, and ship 'em and there were no problems. You always insured 'em, because you didn't want 'em to get lost or stolen.

That was innovative—I hadn't heard that.

But the first bobcats I trapped, I got eight dollars a piece; and the last ones I trapped, I got three hundred and thirty-three dollars a piece—so you figure it out!

Now, had you done trapping before you went to Reese River?

No, I never had. I just had to do something to make extra money, I thought.

So you just kind of.

Just picked it up on my own.

Kind of a smartie! Now, did you do any hunting or fishing?

Oh yeah. We done a lot of hunting: deer hunting, and then we had a lot of friends that would want to go huntin' and fishin', and they'd come out and spend a few days. It'd look like forever we were takin' people huntin' or fishin'. And that's part of my life, anyway, is the huntin' and fishin'. But now I got so damn old, the huntin' is about over with. But the fishin' is still goin' strong.

Good! You're still fishing! Where do you fish?

Oh, Pyramid Lake or creeks or anyplace. Gotta go once or twice a week fishin', you know.

That's wonderful.

That's my time off.

That's wonderful. And is that eatin' fish?

Yeah.

What kind?

Just trout mostly. I don't care about fishin' for bass. Trout fishermen is what we are.

That's wonderful. Does Beulah fish too?

Oh yeah. Yeah, if I tell her I'm goin' fishin', she'll go out and dig the worms so I don't have to worry about it.

[laughs] And when you were In Reese River, where did you fish there?

Oh, we fished mostly Reese River. Reese River's got some giant German browns in it. The biggest one I ever caught was a little over six pounds. Beulah caught one over five-and-a-half. We've caught a lot of fish four and five pounds out of Reese River.

Oh, gosh! Was that kind of main food, or did you give some away?

No, we'd give 'em away.

You didn't have any freezers then, did you?

No, we didn't have freezers, we didn't have electricity until later on, we got electricity.

Now I want you to tell me, because I know that you were very instrumental in getting the phone lines out into the valley. Do you want to describe that contribution in detail?

Well, we had a one-wire phone line, as I said before. And it worked when it wanted to work, and most of the time it was just like me—it never did want to work, or somethin'. Finally, it got so bad the repair on it was too tough. So we had an extension agent out there, Archie Albright, and I went and talked to him. He was from the University of Nevada, and I told him, "Archie, I'm gonna build a phone line." He said, "You are?!" and I said, "Yeah, I'm gonna build it if I have to do it alone." And he said, "Well, I'm gonna help ya." So we kind of organized, between him and I, what could be done and what couldn't be done, and we got to talkin' with Bell Telephone, and they said they wouldn't do it. They wanted \$140,000 to put a phone line in there, plus every phone call would be a toll call, even if we called our neighbor! So they were taking a line out in Elko, so I got ahold of a trucker, and I told him I had a bunch of poles up at Elko if he would haul 'em for me, and I'd pay him for it and everything. So Beulah and I went to Elko and spent three days and loaded the poles. I think we got over seven hundred poles for nothin', and oh, we got an immense amount of wire.

Just the two of you loaded it?!

No, the trucker loaded it. We went up and supervised it, and kept the thing a-goin'.

And they gave it to you free?

Yeah, the thing was free. All I had was the truckin' bill, which Beulah and I absorbed.

Oh, my goodness!

So then, anyway, one Thanksgiving Day, me and Stan Pierce, and I think Alfred Danberg, went down and put a telephone pole down there by the Hess place. And I don't know, it

shook the rest of 'em up, and they come around and said, "Are you gonna build a phone line?" and I said, "You bet I am!" So they wanted in. So we organized the thing, and we figured out that it would be \$1,750 per phone, that I could build the line in there for that, if everybody would do their share in the work.

How many were there then, involved in this project?

Well, let's see, we came up with three party lines and four... We had ten phones to begin with. So anyway, we got the darned thing started, and we built a two-wire line, and we worked in the winter, and it was ten and fifteen [degrees] below zero. We dug holes, we blasted holes with dynamite that we couldn't dig, and the whole valley was just the friendliest bunch of people you ever seen! Everybody was happy and everything, and we hired one man to supervise the job,

Who was that?

That was Jerry Alberson, We paid him six dollars an hour.

In those days, that was good money!

That's right. And he lived right with us there at the ranch, and we fed and gave him shelter and everything, and we didn't charge that to the phone company or anything. And I made a lot of phone calls around, but you know, I didn't charge to the phone company, and we kept the thing a-goin'. And then Bell came out and looked at it one day and they said we were doin' a good job. And I said, "Yeah, a hell of a lot better than you guys can do!" And then the guy wanted to hire me to build telephone lines, and I told him I wasn't interested—cows was in my head. And we did get a protest from

Bell. After we got it started they said that was their franchise. But to get that franchise, there was a Reese River Telephone Company in there that was the oldest telephone company in Nevada. And it belonged to the ranchers. So there was three of the original people left. So I got ahold of two of 'em and I said "I want to buy your franchise." And they said they didn't know whether they wanted to sell it, and I said, "Well, I'm gonna make you an offer for it. There's three of you here, and I'll give you three dollars a piece. That's nine dollars for your whole telephone line. If you want to sell it, sell it." Well, two of 'em came across, but the one held out. But they outvoted him, so we bought a whole telephone company for nine dollars!

Oh my goodness!

So then we got the franchise. Then Bell protested that. After we got the phone line done is when we got the protest, and I had to go to Carson to a meeting up there with Bell and the Public Service Commission. So I told Bell, "We'll sell you the phone line for \$140,000, which you said it would cost to put in there. And we want free phones, no bills for ten years. Any long distance phone calls or anything we made, we didn't want to be billed for it." And they refused to do it. So we kept the line.

Now, do you know, just a general time period that all this was happening? Was this in the seventies?

It was in the seventies. And it ran into the eighties, I think.

Had the population grown in Reese River? Or was it the same?

Yeah, well, we'll have to say the population grew, because there was a lot of desert land

entries come in down there by Highway 50, by the university station. There was families that moved in there. In fact, we put phones down there. And then we got in trouble with the phone line. People didn't have the money to extend it or something, and then they'd all go over to this one guy's place and call, and it became a nuisance. So I'll tell you what really happened with the phone line. It was a party line, see—four parties to a line. Well some of 'em was ornery—if somebody was on the phone, they'd cuss 'em and tell 'em to get off, "I want to use the phone," and all that kind of stuff. And it got to be really a battle. It wasn't on our line—[the people that were on the line] with Beulah and I were real good. If somebody had an urgent phone call, you'd just hang up and tell 'em to go ahead, and you wouldn't listen in, and everything went swell. Well, we had two parties out there that was really terrible. So Steve Rose and I went to the Public Service Commission, and we heard about these satellite phones. So we went and talked to Bell about it first, and they wanted to put it in. The first satellite phones ever put in was in Canada So we got to talkin' to 'em about it, and the Public Service Commission refused to let 'em do it, because there wasn't enough subscribers. So we went back to the Public Service Commission again, and Bell Telephone's engineers were there, and they said they wanted to do it as a project to find out if it would work good, where they could extend it into their utility company at other areas. And the Public Service Commission said, "Yes, we're gonna let you do it." So then we had to sell our phone line to Bell. Here we go again!

Oh dear! Were you the leader in this, doing the negotiations?

Well, Steve Rose and I were. I'm always mixed up in something when I shouldn't be.

Well, anyway, we sold 'em the phone line for a dollar, after all our work. Then we were required to take the old phone line out, see. We sold 'em the phone line, but we retained the material—it all belonged to us. And that's been, I don't know, seven or eight years ago, and we still haven't received the dollar—I don't know why. Anyway, we proportioned the line out, and everybody went and took out a certain amount of miles, and then the material was distributed among the subscribers, which worked out good. And that phone system out there works. It works! You can't believe, it's just like if you was sitting across the table talking to somebody. And the rates are no higher than we are paying right here at the house in Fallon. We have the same rate. And now I see where C.P. National is puffin' one in, in Ruby Valley, and I think you're gonna see a lot of satellite phones going in.

Oh my! Now, how many people are served now in that region by Bell Telephone?

Well, they went to each family, each house, anybody that wanted a phone. All they had to do was say. There was no cost if you came in at the time. But if you came in later, you said no [originally], and you wanted to come in later, they wanted \$10,000 a phone.

Oh my goodness!

But each Indian family, everybody in Reese River has got telephone.

Oh my goodness! And that Indian reservation?

Yeah, the Indian reservation. Then they went over the hill to lone. The guy in lone didn't want a phone. They bypassed him, they put a satellite in, in lone Valley, and they ran a phone up to the lcthyosaur Park at Grantsville.

So they got a phone, too, out of it—the state of Nevada got a phone out of it. It was one of the best things that ever happened to Reese River.

Oh, what a contribution you made! And what a lot of time and energy!

Yeah.

But what a lot of satisfaction, of your contribution.

Well, you feel satisfied you done somethin' good once in a while, you know.

[laughs] That's wonderful!

But when we moved out there, we didn't have a bathroom in the house, we didn't have runnin' water. We put all that in. We had a generator for electricity. I went to work and got busy with Sierra Pacific about gettin' electricity in there.

When did you get that?

Oh, Beulah knows the dates.

Okay, she may have given me that.

But anyway, we had a lot of meetings, and spent a lot of time runnin' around. Sierra Pacific had borrowed the money from the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) to put the power line. You borrow the money from the government at five percent interest, and then you pay it back. Well anyway, they were goin' by, and they were just gonna put the power part-ways up the valley. So the Indians were left out. So the Indians come down to me, and they said, "Well, we're gettin' left out," and this and that. So here we go again! We had to go to Reno and meet with Sierra Pacific and

back and forth. And they didn't say nuthin', and the Indians was still fightin' over it. They said they were bein' left out. And they were having a meeting at the Yomba Reservation, and Sierra Pacific called me up and they said, "We want you to be there." They told me, "We're going to give the Indians electricity. We're going all the way, but don't say a word about it." The Indians had hired an attorney about it, and we were up there at this meeting, anyway, and this is something I'll never forget: there was a gal there, I don't know, I was sat in by her, that was an attorney. Her first name was Susan, but I can't remember...

An attorney for the Indians?

Yeah. They were gonna sue Sierra Pacific, because they were being left out of power. And I already knew that they were gonna get it that day, they were gonna be told. And she stood up and said, "That's grounds for a lawsuit!" And I grabbed her by the skirt and sat her down, and I said, "You shut your goddamn mouth!" That's the exact words I used. And she didn't know what to say, and I told her to, "Sit there!" And then they came up and told the Indians that they were gonna get their power up there. Now if she'd have kept talkin', they'd have got mad, and they'd have walked out, and the Indians wouldn't have got it, right?

Oh, my goodness. She didn't know they were gonna get it?

No, they hadn't told anybody but me, see.

I see! It's a good thing you were sitting next to her!

I was the only one that'd been told before the meeting that they were going up there.

Now, they get it free as part of the Indian rights?

No, Sierra Pacific built the lines up there, but they have to pay for their power, just like you and I do. And if they don't pay for it, they're shut off, just like you and I. They're not treated any better or any worse than you and I are.

And so by the time, then, you had the electricity, you had your plumbing inside? You took care of that?

Oh yeah, took care of everything.

You re very talented!

We'll we're just like "livin' uptown," I guess.

And you had standards. You didn't want to just keep the outhouse all the time.

No.

Now, how long did you stay on that ranch? When did you come back to Fallon?

We came back four years ago, whenever that is. What's this, 1995? We were out there thirty-eight years.

So afterward, I know Beulah and the children joined you, so life changed. The kids were finished with school when she came?

Well, yeah, when they got out of high school...Well, Irene went on to college. She was three years older than Rachel. She went to Las Vegas to the University of [Nevada at] Las Vegas to school. And then when

Rachel got out, she went to UNR (University of Nevada, Reno). And they both got their college education, and Beulah and I were by ourselves out there.

So she came when the kids were on their own by then?

That's right. When they went on to college and everything, well, then she stayed out there full-time.

What did you do with the house here?

We leased this ranch out.

Okay, the ranch and the old house.

Yeah, we leased it all—just like it is today, it's leased out again.

Oh, it is? The farm and the house?

Yeah.

So when she came, tell me, by the time she came, and all of the years that you were there, the changes in the ranch itself.

Well, we done a lot of improvement: we built new corrals, we fixed the house up, we built a great big galvanized shop there for the machinery, and we bought modern machinery to hay with. I went to work and I leveled a bunch of sagebrush ground, put in ninety-one acres of alfalfa under wheel lines [a sprinkler system for irrigation [Ed.]] and a deep well. And there you go, with a deep well, again, Sierra Pacific wanted \$12,000 before they would put power to the well, and they came by in the fall and I wouldn't pump until the spring, and I said, "Yeah, I'll give

you the \$12,000, but I want twelve percent interest on it,” and they refused to give me the interest, and I refused to give ‘em the money. [laughter] And so I’m the only one in the valley that had a well hooked up and never had to put a down payment on it! Well, I had a right to have interest on my \$12,000. They wouldn’t give me interest, I wouldn’t give ‘em the money, but I got the well in and they hooked it up, and everything is fine.

Oh my! So you stayed pretty much in the cattle and hay?

Yeah, we were just strictly cattle, you know. We had a few sheep, just for ranch use. It was all cattle.

Were there any years when you had a bad drought or a terrible winter where you had losses or hardships?

Oh, we had a lot of drought out there. One year we shipped cattle to Fallon, even, for hay and everything. And we bought quite a bit of hay until I got the alfalfa goin’. Then I raised enough extra hay that I could store it, so if we had a drought, I never had to worry about it. And it worked beautiful. It was a good investment. I should have done it sooner, but I don’t know, you have to wait until you’ve got the money to do things. We had to pay the place off first, and make sure it was ours before we sunk a lot of money in it.

Uh-huh. Well, it seems like you gave a lot of wise thought to all of the things that you did. It wasn’t anything haphazard.

Well, you have to figure out your investments, what the return is going to

be. You can’t just invest money and have no return. That’s the way I look at it.

You were wise. Through your adult years, did you do any prospecting or mining?

I don’t know. I sat on a pile of rock one day and ate my lunch, and a guy come along and claimed it and said it was full of mercury, and then I don’t know. I don’t know anything about rock.

That’s not your area?

No. Rock is rock as far as I’m concerned.

Okay. You gotta be with living cows. So those were very busy years! I mean, night and day. Were they happy years?

Yeah, we were happy out there, you know. You worked hard and everything else, but... Well, in later years we even got a satellite dish, the last few years we were out there, and had TV. Before that, you couldn’t get nuthin’. But we always had something to do. If it wasn’t cows, somebody’d come along and want to go huntin’ or fishin’. And then there was always somethin’ to do. You didn’t lay around.

Did your girls come out to visit?

Yeah, they come out quite a bit.

Did they like it there? Did they do any ranching?

Oh yeah, they both liked it. But Irene loved the horses and the cattle. Rachel didn’t care too much for the horses, but she did like the cattle too, and she’d go out and help feed. Whenever they came out, they worked.

Were there any mustang horses out there?

Well, we didn't call 'em mustangs. They were just ranch horses that people couldn't catch or anything else. And I caught a few of 'em, but that's like having small pox or some kind of fever—you never get over it. So I had to tell myself not to do it, because I knew I'd be chasm' horses all the time and not doin' my work.

You mean you liked to do it?

There isn't anything better than chasm' wild horses.

Describe it!

I don't know, it can beat the forty [degrees] below zero and the north wind blowin', and heck, you're after this horse, "I'm gonna get him! I'm gonna get him! Or ain't I gonna get him?" And the sweat is just a-pourin' off, and you don't feel cold at all, until you catch him.

[laughs] For goodness sakes! How do you catch 'em?

We roped em.

Who's "we"? Who did you go with?

Well, usually I had somebody with me to herd 'em around so I could get a rope on him.

Like one of the neighbors?

Oh, the kids, or somebody like that.

How many did you ever catch?

Well, we caught quite a few of 'em. I don't like to talk about that. They might put me in jail yet!

No, no, no. [laughter]

I can tell you some experiences catchin' wild horses that you won't believe! This friend of ours wanted a fitly out there. "I'd sure like to have that horse." Well, she didn't have a brand on her. I knew it belonged to the neighbor, and I said, "Sure, we'll go catch her." So Irene, my daughter, and I and Stan, this fellah that wanted the horse, I said, "We'll go out." I got done shoeing horses and I said, "We'll go catch that horse up there." So I told him where to go, and I'd go up and round her up, and they put her through the gate. Well, the stupid thing took up the hill. So I took after her as hard as I could go, and I had a brand new lariat in my hand. And just as I reached the top of the hill, I roped her and started taking my dallies* and there's a big pile of rocks, and I knew that was the end of me. I knew my horse was gonna spill, so I threw the rope away, and here I sat up on the hill and here goes a ten-dollar horse and a ten-dollar rope—brand new rope, goin' like the devil. She made a turn, and I figured, "I'll head her off," and I took after her. This could never happen again. I was ridin', comin' up behind her, and the rope hit a sagebrush and come right up in my hand, and I took my dailies and stopped her there. By the time Irene and Stan got there, I had her choked down. She was layin' on the ground, and they had a halter, and I put the halter on her and let her up, and I had her halter broke by the time we got to the house—we had about four miles to go. Then he took her to Tonopah and he tried to ride her, and he come back and he said, "I'm takin' that

*"Dally" is from the Spanish dar la vuelta, literally, "give the turn," and it refers to throwing a half hitch [knot] around the horn of the saddle the rider is riding. This secures the rope.

horse back to you.” I said, “What happened?” He said, “I don’t mind gettin’ bucked off in the corral, but she bucked me clear over the fence, and I don’t want to ride her again!”

Oh my gosh! Did you keep her?

Yeah, we kept her, and then some hunter come along and shot her—I can’t believe it. She was down in the pasture there, and [he] shot her.

Did you know Bill Givens? He used to run with the wild horses. He describes that.

Yeah, Bill Givens, I know him.

He got hurt a lot: I think his lung and his back, hunting those.

A horse has never hurt me.

Oh, good!

I’ve spilled with ‘em, I’ve rolled with ‘em, but I’ve...

How old were you when you were doing all this?

Well, in my forties, I guess, and fifties.

You were a wild one! [laughs]

Well, chasm’ wild horses is a lot of fun!

That’s a wonderful story, a wonderful description of it, Tony. Now, is there anything else on that Reese River Valley period, when you were there taking care of everything? Because I don’t know enough to ask you...

Well, I got along good with our Indian friends.

Oh, tell me about the reservation.

I was a brand inspector, a fee inspector for about eighteen years until I got mad and quit.

Where did you do the brand inspecting?

All that area out there. I inspected all the cattle that left, and then I got mad at the new guy at the Department of Agriculture, and I told him I was quittin’, and he told me I couldn’t quit, and I said, “You can’t tell me I can’t do anything! I’m gonna do it.” And I quit.

Where did you do this inspecting? What region?

Well, it was mostly in Nye and Lander Counties, in that region. Sometimes they’d send me into Churchill County. Sometimes they’d want me to go clear to Tonopah. Yeah, I done Churchill County.

But in Lander County, which we’re interested in, did you do some of the big ranches? Did you do the Inchauspes?

No, I didn’t do Inchauspes.

Which ones did you do? Can you remember any?

Oh, I done Gandolfos and Toiyabe Cattle Company, and went to Alpine and Churchill Counties, and all up the valley there.

When did you do all that? How did you have time to do all that?

Well, I done it in between workin’.

Slow seasons of the hay?

Well, the shipping was mostly in the fall, see. Some in the spring, if they had their cattle

ready. And then I went to Monitor Valley a lot. Oh, I traveled quite a bit.

You were a busy man!

Well, you gotta have somethin' to do. You can't sit down all the time.

[laughs] You must have been very energetic—with your mind and your...

The Indians come down one day...

First, how big was that reservation? About how many lived on it?

There was about twenty-one families up there, or more.

Mainly families?

Yeah, well, there's some single people too—you know, men. Well, anyway, an Indian come down, Leroy Brady, come down to Beulah's one day—I wasn't home—and she said he said, "You know, Tony got the most votes for the housing authority, on the board." She said, "What?!" I come home and she told me about it. I said, "How can you win an election when you don't even have your name in?!" So anyway, I went up there and I worked with the Indians, and we got a housing...

Oh my! Describe that in great detail. You're the only one that's ever told me this.

A housing board, you know, where you get a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) grant to build houses with. Okay, we wanted money to build twenty-two houses, and it took us a period—we fought and fought—it was about four years before we got the

money, and we went ahead and built twenty-two houses out there for the Indians on the reservation, and all I gotta say about them Indians, they have taken care of their houses. I've heard a lot of bad stories about this HUD housing, but those Indians out there, I admire 'em for it, they have taken care of their houses.

Now why was it so hard to get approval from HUD?

Because there wasn't enough Indians. They wanted a big project of a hundred houses, and it's always the same way—wherever you have just a few, well then you have a hard time gettin' a grant.

Now how does that HUD work?

Well, we're not on a turnkey, we were on a low-rent basis. On a turnkey, people that have turnkey housing, people have a right to buy them houses.

I see.

But on a low rent, it's a forty-year loan anyway, and you know damn well at the end of the forty years, the government is gonna write it off. And what happens, at the end of forty years, whichever Indian is livin' in that house, will get that house free of cost.

Did the HUD have standard housing that they just put up? Do they all look alike? Pretty standard?

Well, we went to two-, three-, and four-bedroom homes. We try to get 'em... Well, they more or less look alike, but we had 'em painted different, and stuff like that.

Okay, so the board had some say in this.

Yeah.

Did the Indians have any say in this?

The Indians really didn't have any say. They put in for whether they wanted two-, three-, or four-bedroom house. And then all the utilities was put in that house. They had a refrigerator and that, and stoves and the propane tanks, and the sewage was all put in and everything. And then we had to hire a secretary and a maintenance man. Now, the maintenance man, he looked after anything that went wrong. But if there was something that the Indian destroyed in that house, we took care of it, as a board. He paid for it. They thought they could get away with it, but they couldn't. As long as I was on the board, they never got away with it. But since I left, I've wondered what happened. I'll give you a "for instance." This one Indian got mad at his wife. He was drunk and he was gonna kill her, and he couldn't find no bullets for his rifle, so he threw the gun through a picture window and broke the window out of it. Then he didn't want to pay for that window. Well, we got him up before the board, and he paid for that window, I'll tell you that.

Well, you have to have a control, sure.

And then any damage that they done to a house—a door or anything—if they didn't want to pay it, we'd just take 'em to the authorities there in Gabbs, and they paid it—they paid it.

What was the rent like?

Well, it depended upon the person's income. Some of them, if they worked, you know, like over in lone in the mines and they were making a big income, some of 'em paid

up to prit near three hundred dollars a month rent.

Which at that time was a lot of money.

But then you come down where there's an elderly couple or somethin', and all they had was a little old pension or somethin', we actually paid them to live in them houses. We paid the utilities and everything for 'em, you know. They didn't get no cash money for livin' in it, but we took care of the utilities and the propane and heating of it and the power and the telephone. So actually, we paid them to live in that house. But see, when you do a HUD housing project, you can't...Well, how do I want say it? Anybody that applies for a house out there, say even if it's a black person or a Mexican or somethin', you have to leave 'em in if there's a house available. And we never had that problem. We just had the Indians all the time. And then, you know, we had a couple of instances where there'd be a white man livin' with an Indian woman, and they would do more damage to a house than anybody else. And they wouldn't take care of the yard. The first thing you know, you had a bunch of old cars and everything. Well, we'd remove the cars, and they'd pay the bill. When I was there, they paid, but I don't know what's happened since.

How many years were you on that board, about?

Oh, ten or twelve.

Oh, a long time!

Until I left there.

You never had a minute where you just sat around, I can tell that! [laughs]

No, I had to have something to do. If I sat around the house, you know, Beulah'd find a lot of stuff for me to do. I've learned this quick! When you're second in command, you know how to handle stuff.

Now, how much time did you give thought to leaving there to come back to Fallon?

Well, the work got to where we were unable to do it. Well, you couldn't hire anybody to do that kind of work any more. So the only solution was, that if we couldn't do the work, we had to sell. And that was it. So we thought about it for a couple of years, and we put the place up for sale, and it took a while to get it sold. And we kept working at it until it sold.

Who bought it?

Well, Wayman and Judy Rosclund bought it. They were cattle people, they had cows of their own. So we decided we had a good herd of Hereford cattle—we were Hereford people—we decided that their cattle was used to winter range, where ours were used to being fed in the winter, so we decided we'd sell our cows and they would keep their cows—it'd work out better for both of us.

Was that a hard decision?

It was.

It must have been so difficult.

And when we moved here, for six months it was horrible. There wasn't a cow to look at, there wasn't a calf, a sheep—nuthin'!

Oh, you could just cry!

Well, I'll tell you the truth: I moved to Fallon, I gave all my horses away but one horse. We had some real good horses—as good as you ever get cow horses. I didn't want 'em to go to chicken feed, and I gave the horses away, all except one old horse that all the kids rode, I rode him and everybody rode him, and he was broke to rope—you could do anything on him. We pensioned him off. We had one old dog when we moved to Fallon. Well, I'll put it this way: When we came to Fallon, I had one old horse, one old dog, and one old wife. [laughter] And you know, my dog just died, so I got an old horse and an old wife left. [laughter]

You're funny! [laughing] So when you came back, what did you do, take the lease away from the people living in the old house?

No, we built this new home here,

Now, when you were moving back, was that the plan, to build a new home?

Well, we went around town, looking for a house to buy. Well, what they wanted for a house—and Beulah was dissatisfied, "I gotta do this, I gotta do that, I gotta do something else." We looked at quite a few houses, and I finally got to the point one day, we were riding along, and I said, "You know what, I'm going to build a new house." And she said, "Where you gonna build it?" I said, "Well, we got a sand hill out there on the place. We got land of our own, we're buildin' a new house there." So we seen a couple of contractors and asked 'em about price and everything, and got a floor plan that Beulah liked. And I said, "Now you build this house the way you want it. Don't you ever complain to me about somethin' that isn't right. I don't want to hear you ever say another word about it."

Now where did you live while they were building this house?

Well, we didn't move in until the house was finished.

So where did you live?

We lived at Reese River.

Oh, I see what you mean. In other words, you came up here, made that decision...

Yeah, we had the house built before we moved.

So how was it supervised? Or did Beulah stay here a lot?

Well, we had a friend that would come over that was a carpenter, and he'd come over every other day and just watch—not supervise—just watch that they were building it right.

Make sure they were working.

You know, building it right. And like he told me—he passed away here a while back—he said, "You know, I taught them boys quite a few things. I've been a carpenter for many years, and you know, they taught me a few things too. So it all worked out good."

Would you come in sometimes on a weekend just to see the progress?

Well, we'd come in, they'd call us when they had somethin' they wanted. So we'd drive in. Like drillin' a well, we had to come in, get the well a-goin'. Had to go see the Churchill County Fire Department about the bridge, the width of the bridge and the length of the

bridge. [A bridge across the irrigation ditch to enter their property. [Ed.]] And we had to see Sierra Pacific about the power, and we had to see the telephone company...

There's a lot of detail! Now, did you keep any land for any ranching?

Well, we have two hundred acres of land here and we still own it all.

Uh-huh, but you lease out?

Yeah, we lease it out.

You're not doing ranching now.

No, just here on this hill.

When you say "here on this hill," what do you mean?

Well, I got the low ground, and Beulah's got the high ground. See, where I raise my flowers and my vegetables? That's our big ranch, right here on this hill!

I did take pictures last time, but I want to get a few more this time.

This is our big farm, right on this hill, see?

You know, this is a beautiful area and beautiful house.

There's electric fence right out there that keeps the cattle out of here.

It's a beautiful area here.

And then I've got about three hundred quail I feed.

I saw two cross the road this morning.

Yeah, they're part of my quail.

Oh, I've got to get some more pictures! So now, you came back here. Do you remember approximately when you came back? Was it in the early nineties? Four years ago, you said.

We came back in May of...

In 1991?

It'd be 1991. May 6 or 12, we moved in here.

How long did it take you to finally feel at home here?

Oh, just about a year.

Yeah, I would think.

It was different.

It's hard. You didn't know what to do with yourself, right?

No, we didn't raise a garden, we didn't plant anything.

What do you do now to fill in your time? I know you're doing a lot of carving.

Well, I do carving, I do poetry, I do gardening, I do flowers. I trap gophers and I go fishin'. I help the neighbors whenever they leave—I'm the choreboy of the neighborhood.

[chuckles] I bet you're loved by everyone.

Well, I don't know, some of the chores they give me, I don't think they love me too much.

So do you find now that you're settled in and you found areas that you never had time for before...

We've seen a lot of Nevada that we had never seen before.

Oh, you're travelling now?

Oh yeah.

Tell me about that.

Well, if there's places in Nevada we want to go see, we go see. We've been to New Mexico and down there once. We went to Canada, and we were in Washington here last spring. We do quite a bit of travelling. We gotta travel as long as we can go.

Yes, that's smart.

Because the day is comin' where they're gonna say they ain't gonna give us no more driver's license.

Do you both drive?

Uh-huh. I'm the better driver, though.
[laughter]

Now, you said you're seeing a lot of Nevada that you hadn't seen. What parts?

Well, we went clear down through Hiko, Caliente. We spent four days lookin' at wildflowers. Can you imagine an old fool like me lookin'...

And where was that?

Well, we went down through Death Valley and Tonopah and then Beatty, and

then we crossed over and went down through Warm Springs and went clear down to Hiko, Caliente, Pioche. Oh, we've been all over.

That's wonderful!

Just to look at wildflowers! [chuckles]

Well, now you can see the part of you that didn't have time in all those years—your artistic and poetic side.

Oh, I have no talent at all!

You have a lot of talent! When did you start carving these beautiful...Of course you love cows. You don't have the real thing, and that's obviously why you do so many of the cattle and the calves. When did you start all that?

Well, that was caused by one of my daughters. She loves windmills. She's got more windmills than you've ever seen. If you build a windmill for one, you gotta build a windmill for the other one, you know. She asked me to build her a windmill, and I told her, "Rachel, it's impossible, I don't know how, and I can't do it."

You had never done that before, is that it?

No. So I built a windmill. So then I built two of 'em: one for her and one for Irene. Well, when they got the windmill, "Well, where's the animals?" So then I had to make animals."

That's wonderful!

So I started doin' animals. And I've given away I don't know how many of them.

I've got some that I adore!

And then the Newlands Water Protective Association wanted me to donate to them. So I donated the animals to them. One pair of Herefords I think brought eight-five dollars.

Did they auction them off for fund raising?

They auctioned them off for fund raising, and my longhorns brought a hundred and five, and I think my pigs brought ninety-five, a pair of 'em.

Oh my! See that? You're talented.

And then the other day the high school rodeo association wanted some. So I give 'em a pair of...Well, I started a new breed of cattle: polled longhorns.

What does polled mean?

No horns. Longhorns without horns. [laughter] I took 'em down to that auction sale down there at the Harmon Schoolhouse and put 'em up for sale, and I wrote a poem to go with 'em. They brought eighty dollars for the kids. It was for a good purpose, I donated. And then I had a little burro, about two or three inches high, and I put him in a surprise package, put it in a box, styrofoam around it. Then I put it in another box and taped it all good together, and then Beulah took and put it in beautiful wrapping paper and big ribbon on it, and it was a surprise box. It brought ninety-five bucks for that little old donkey, but nobody knew what was in the box!

Well, I think they're wonderful, and you're so talented. Did you first start doing those here in your retirement? Is that when you first started? You didn't have time before!

I never carved anything in my life until I moved here. I never wrote a poem until here last fall.

See, all that talent, you didn't have time.

I don't call it talent.

Oh, that's talent, that's artistic creativity! And you hand carved, and you had the concept for it. It isn't like it's cut out from a stencil or anything.

Well, I've been around animals all my life. If I don't know what an animal looks like, I'll never learn, right? That's been my life, is animals.

But most people can't interpret what they see in a live animal into a carving—so that's wonderful. So that's one hobby. Now tell me about the poetry. When did you start that? When did you learn that you could do that?

I have doubts whether I can do it or not—write poetry—but we were goin' up through the Redwoods last fall—we were goin' to Canada, and that oldest daughter [Irene] and her husband and Beulah and I... Well, we both got good cars and everything, but theirs is kind of a medium-size car, so we decided, well, to be comfortable, we rented a big Lincoln Towncar—you know, one of them big old buggers about a half-mile long.

Where does your daughter live, Tony?

In Bakersfield, California.

What did you do, drive there to meet them?

No, they drove up here. So we left here and we rented a car for two weeks. We were goin' up through the Redwoods—we'd been

through there before, Beulah and I, when the girls were small. And Irene couldn't remember the Redwoods, so we went up along the coast, just to see the Redwoods, and then went on into Canada.

How long a trip was that?

Well, we were gone two weeks. We came back through Montana, Yellowstone National Park, and Charlie Russell Museum, and Edmonton. Oh, we seen a lot of things. I couldn't describe everything we've seen—it'd take all day.

So did this create the thought for poetry?

While we were ridin' along in the back of the car, I don't know, somethin' come into my mind, and I told Beulah, "Have you got a pencil and a piece of paper?" And she had a little bitty old notebook about three-by-three, and a pencil, and I started writin', and that's the first poem I ever wrote in my life.

You're kidding! And that was kind of neat, huh?

Well, I don't know. They said it was good, and I didn't know whether it was good or not.

So how many have you done now? How often do you spend time with that?

I don't write, but when I get a desire, I get a thought in my mind, I can come in and set down and write it out in a half-hour.

Oh my goodness.

But then I might not write for two or three days or a week until I get another thought.

I hope you'll share some with me.

I've got a lot of 'em. I'll let you read 'em. I'll let you read the first one I wrote, too.

I'd love that! I know in the first interview you told me how much you liked to read, and that you'd wanted to be an attorney. You had to be a rancher, and you have a lot of books around. Do you have time to read now?

I read every night when I go to bed. In fact, I'm readin' about the history of California right now.

Which book is that?

The Californians is the name of it.

That's wonderful.

I don't know, I just love to read. I read everything—good or bad. Some of 'em ain't too good, and I shouldn't read 'em.

Yeah, but then you appreciate the good ones more.

Yeah, well, I like good western stories, or somethin' to do with history or stuff like that. I don't like these modern books. I don't know, I don't even like your modern movies, if you want to know the truth.

I agree with you.

I don't even waste my time watchin' 'em. We get a lot of newspapers, and I read all them.

Keep up to date.

And you watch news ton TV, it's the same reruns with different names, isn't it? Just about all it is.

Uh-huh. So now your life is quite rich, it seems, in your quote, unquote, "retirement," being able to pursue these wonderful areas mat you didn't know about before.

Well, I don't know. Before we were too damned busy. Now we ain't busy enough, I guess! [laughter] Gotta do somethin'.

Yeah, well, that's great, because so many just plop in front of TV and whither.

Well, I like sports on TV and all that. I like [the TV game show] Jeopardy and stuff like that. I like an old movie, or a good movie.

Well, it sounds like a balance in your life.

I just don't go for these movies that all it is, is shootings and destruction and bombing...

Violence.

I just don't like 'em and I don't watch 'em.

Well, it sounds like you're in control of your life, and that you have certainly contributed so much in your life and to so many people. Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you want to add to the tape before we close the interview?

Well, I don't know, that's the story of my life. That's about it, I guess. Some things I don't want to put on tape, you know, that I done. [laughter]

I know what I want to ask you, because it affected California when Miramar Top Gun made the decision to move them up here to the Fallon base. Have there been changes in the base from your personal observation and knowledge?

Well, you know, when the base first started it was during World War II, and all they had here was gas-motored planes—the little guys, you know. And we were livin' in Fallon at that time. And I've seen more crashes, you know, where they were trainin' the boys and everything. They would fly so low they'd even take the limbs off the trees sometimes.

Oh my goodness!

They've never bothered me. I've always liked airplanes, and as long as they're our airplanes and not Russians, I'm not going to complain about it. Then after the war, they shut the base down, you know, for a period of years there. And then they revitalized it, and the base, from what it was to what it is today—in fact, it's unbelievable to me, you know, that they, out here in this old desert, would want anything. They got Top Gun comin' in now. And right back here on our far east property line, I understand they're building two hundred and eight—three new houses right there. So the base is gonna continue. And then what I read in the newspaper the other day, they're closin' some more bases, but Fallon will not be closed. And the economy of Fallon, it's amazing how many civilians are workin' at this base. If the base was shut down, Fallon would be somethin' else.

Is that right?

It would go back to what it used to be.

Now, have the Miramar people moved here yet, do you know? The Top Gun from Miramar?

No, they're not done with the barracks and that. They're workin' on the barracks.

So they're preparing for that move?

Yeah, they're preparing for it, they're workin' on it.

When you say a lot of private people who aren't military, are those the contracts that handle.

Well, there's a lot of 'em in civil service, you know, that do maintenance and a lot of that stuff, and mechanics and stuff like that. There's a lot of people workin' down there.

I know that when I was here a year or two ago, I was privileged to be among a group from the museum that went into their computer-controlled battle training, where they do it all on computer. And they were all contract people, running that system. Do you know much about that?

No, I'm not too familiar with that kind of stuff.

Very sophisticated, where they train them for battle in Iraq, and through computer, and to the ones in the planes.

I know what you mean.

So Fallon is really moving forward economically and increased population?

As far as the base is, but then we have this battle about the water—they don't want 'em to have the water, but that is another story.

Did you get a lot of rain this winter? We did.

We did. We got more rain in Fallon than I've seen in years and years.

So did that fill the reservoirs and the lake?

Well, the lake will fill. It is coming up fast right now, and it's going to fill. And I'm sure that the wildlife will get water and everything else, and then everybody will shut up until we have another drought.

Will it fill the ditches, will they be able to irrigate?

It would. The people will get 100 percent of their allocated water.

That's the first time in over seven years, isn't it?

Well, 1993, didn't they get it in 1993, a hundred percent? Yeah.

Okay.

But this is the eighth year—we had six years of drought. This would be your eighth one. You know, it's like Lake Tahoe hit the rim the other day—and that hasn't happened since 1993. They're gonna put the splash boards in there and raise it up.

I know we've had flooding in California, and we had that drought, too, for over seven years.

Well, they're gonna store the water in Lake Tahoe.

Good. So that means things may be thriving for a little while.

Yeah, well, you know, in the western states here, we're pretty arid. We don't have the water like they do up in British Columbia or someplace. What are you gonna do?

Sure.

And then Nevada's growing too fast anyway.

Is the heavy growth here in Fallon, is that pretty obvious? Do you go into the town much?

Oh yeah, it's unbelievable, your traffic and everything, and the people in the stores. Heck, when we first lived here, I knew everybody in the store—now I can go through a store and never see a person I know.

And the traffic, because the trucks have to go through town, there's no bypass.

Yeah, well, there's a Scheckler bypass, but then they come up the Lovelock Highway, going south, and off the freeway, the shortcut, and then they gotta go through town. It isn't as bad as Reno or California yet.

Oh no. And also, you don't have to go there much. You're out in a nice, wonderful, peaceful area here. Close to town, but...

Yeah. We don't go to town unless we have to.

What about the medical care? Does Fallon have pretty good medical care if you need it?

Well, if there's something real serious, you know, or somethin', they'll fly a doctor in from Reno, you know, a specialist or somethin', I guess. And they've got that hospital there now, and they're building a new one right at the present time. And now they're worried—the county dads and city dads—what they're gonna do with the old one. But all they'll do is put more government offices in there. We need more bureaucrats in here, is all we need. [Arden laughs] Let's not get into politics.

No, we're not gonna do that. In fact...

Because you might be amazed at what you'll hear! [chuckles]

So is there anything more on your life, or your observations, that you want to add before we close?

No, I don't think so. I've lived a full life—if I die tomorrow, I'm dead, and what's the difference? I've done what I wanted to do in my life.

I think it's wonderful. It's been a real delight. I'm glad we finally were able to get together to finish this interview, and on behalf of both the Lander County and Churchill County Oral History Projects—because we've shared history in both counties—I want to thank you so much for your contribution. And now I want to look at some of your poetry.

Okay, we shall do.

Thank you. This is the end of the interview.

TO BEULAH

It's bright moonlight
There will be a skating party tonight

I met a gal from Fallon Town
Five foot seven and her hair was brown

This gal didn't like to skate
So I asked her for a date

If you will go with me I must know
With me will you go to the picture show

She said very happy she would be
To go to the picture show with me

That is how our romance started
The more we were together the less we wanted
to be parted

We went out together for a year or more
One night sitting by the lake shore

I asked her to marry me
She said your wife I am happy to be

Before she could have a second thought
I got a preacher to tie the knot

Now I have her tied up and she must stay
I know the knot is tied so she can't get away

More than fifty years have gone past
But the knot is still holding fast

THE MILKER OF COWS

I grew up being a gardener and milker of cows
Many a day I drove horses pulling plows

As the years go by this load alone is too much to carry
I will have to find me a good woman, a wife to marry

To you my dreams may be very strange
I always wanted to run Hereford cattle out on a range

Then one day, may I say only by chance
I was given the opportunity to buy a ranch

There has been a great change in my life
two children I have and also a wife

These two children drink a lot of milk
Faster than a silkworm making silk

I have been racking my brain for sometime now
The only solution is to get us a milk cow

Milking a cow on one side, I would take my place
The calf on the other always thought he was in a race

The calf on the other side came around and looked in my eye
Looking at him all I could do was let out a big sigh

Right then and there, I made a vow
Never again would I take milk from a cow

Now, a milker of cows, even if it is a lady
Is just a thief stealing milk from a baby

© 1995 by Tony Testolin

THE GOLDEN YEARS

When we are senior citizens I've been told
That the years will turn to gold

I don't know why these are called the golden years
My aches and pains to my eyes bring tears

My eyes must not be as good as they used to be
For at close without glasses I can hardly see

My hair is short my ears it doesn't shade
But I can hardly hear without a hearing aid

Up those mountains fast I used to go
Now they are hard to climb even going slow

Up into the saddle I used to spring
Now I find it hard to climb up into the darn thing

The hay bales have doubled in weight
It's even hard for me to shut a gate

I used to walk not close but far
Now I won't go unless I go by car

My height has started to shrink
My brain now refuses to think

It's a good thing I get medicare
For my body is in constant need of repair

The little boy sat on the curb with tears in each eye
I asked the little boy for why he did cry

He said he could not do what the big boys do
So I sat down beside him and cried too

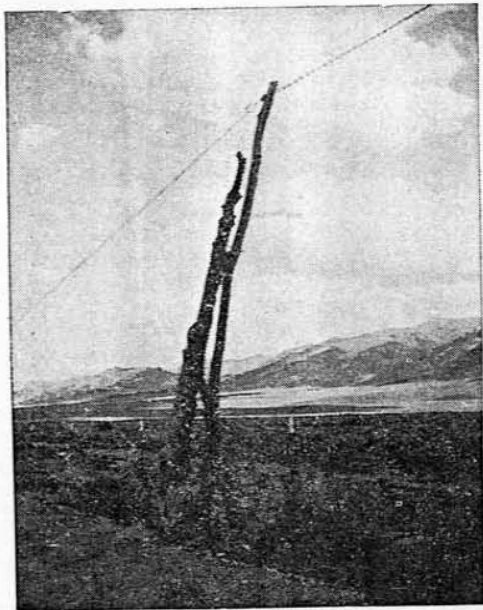
TONY TESTOLIN PHOTOGRAPHS



TONY AND BEULAH TESTOLIN,
front of original house on Testolin Homestead, Fallon, Nevada, August 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

Hard Work, Self Reliance Build Telephone Line



The sturdy pioneers of central Nevada had nothing on the self reliant ranchers of the present day in Reese River valley, west and south of Austin.

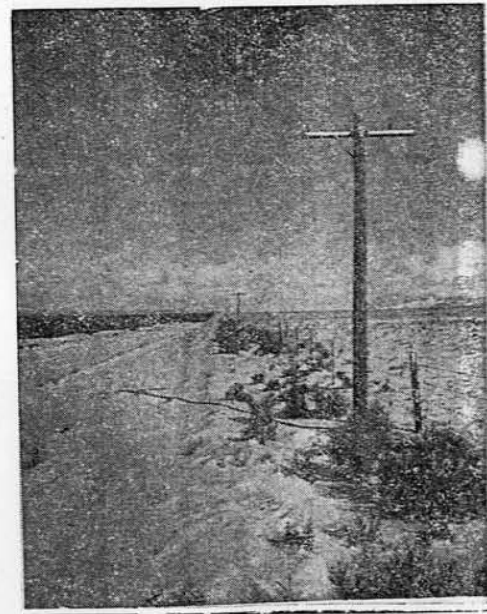
Testament to this is a serviceable, well built 50-mile telephone line, constructed by members of the Shoshone telephone cooperative who contributed all money, labor and equipment necessary to bring the utility to reality without the help of loans or grants from any governmental agency.

"Truly an achievement to be proud of in this day of dependency on 'big brother' for even the smallest projects," said Archie Albright, area extension agent. "Central Nevada people should be proud to have a group of folks in the area who overcame many obstacles to build one of the best farm telephone lines in the western United States."

Although there are only nine subscribers to the cooperative, they are scattered along the 60 mile line so no one in the area will be far from a telephone in case of an emergency.

When the original Reese River telephone line reached the end of the road several years ago, a determined group of ranchers and concerned citizens combined to bring service into the valley in the face of many obstacles. Not the least of

(Continued on Page Five)



FROM THE OLD.....TO THE NEW

ESMERALDA
Around The County Seat

By JANE J. CARLSON

TONOPAH TIMES-BONANZA AND

Goldfield News

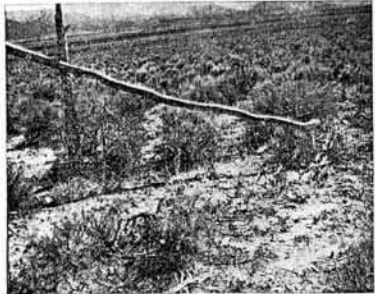
Fri., April 20, 1973 — Tonopah, Nev.

Tonopah Times-Bonanza and Goldfield News

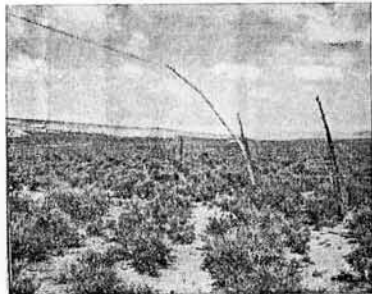
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Reese River Phone Line Built In 1911 - - A Self Help Project In 1973

THE OLD



DOWN AND OUT is this original line of the Reese River telephone company, built in 1911. (Extension Service Photo)



WEIGHT OF LOCAL CALL might pull this pole of original Reese River telephone company to the ground. (Extension Service Photo)



ORIGINAL POST OF OLD TELEPHONE line lies nearby as line is strung on fence post tied nearby with barbed wire and a strand of smooth wire. (Extension Service Photo)

MANHATTAN

(Continued From Page One)

advise anyone to try it from this way.

Felix Harris of Concord, Calif. returned Saturday after a seven years absence. He is now employed in construction in Las Vegas and came up to say hello and hunt some bottles.

John Cooper and son Danny spent the week end in Manhattan, donating their services to replace the windows in our little church with beautiful stained plexiglass. We hope, with some help from the home folks and outsiders, to have it in fair shape for Easter Sunday.

George and LaVerna Moorhead and their guests, Tom and Jean Stratton of British Columbia, enjoyed a delicious dinner at the Palace club in Round Mountain Sunday.

Bill and Vera Lehman and Emma Jo were out to say hello Sunday.

George and Karen Robertson and children of Big Pine, Calif. and Sam and Lela Kaster visited friends here Sunday.

Charley and Audrey Saccop of Round Mountain were over for a short time Saturday. Nice to see Charley up and around after his recent heart attack.

Early Easter vacationers have started to come for a week or so of getting away from the city. Clint and Mary Branwell and son Gordon of Sacramento, Calif. arrived Friday for a 10-day rest.

Old timers Al and Frances (Dillard) Phail and daughter Sharon of Hacienda Heights, Calif. visited Manhattan and Round Mountain Sunday. Frances was born here and married Al here in 1937. They left a few years later.

Allan Kennedy and sons Brian and Tim spent the week end in their home here. Don Holbrook of Salmon, Idaho was their guest.

(Continued From Page One)

the obstacles was a quotation by a major telephone company of \$140,000 to construct the line.

Undaunted, the people of the valley were determined not to be denied service because of the tremendous costs. They began to explore all possible ways to do the job. Three years were spent looking for materials, getting costs and ways of financing what at times appeared to be an almost impossible project.

Used materials were located; such as wires, poles, insulators and cross-arms at Elko, cross-arms and insulators at Winnemucca and insulators at Yerington. These were acquired for freighting to Austin. Then a dry spell occurred when it seemed there were no used materials available.

The supplies were accumulated at three points in the valley and the search was underway for the remainder needed to complete the job when disaster struck. One day a haystack fire burned out of control at one of the ranches, burning over 100 of the hard to find poles.

Again, the courage of the group showed through and the people of the valley decided to seek help from existing local sources. They called on the county agent who responded with some thoughts and ideas and agreed to help them in their efforts.

Meetings were called, inviting all the people of the valley to attend and express their feelings. This resulted in formation of the Shoshone telephone cooperative to provide a means of raising money, pooling thoughts and labor and to provide a bargaining agency.

A board of directors was elected and given authority to proceed. Tony Testolin, Reese River rancher, was named president and resident agent; Arleigh Richmond, Toiyabe Cattle Co., vice president; Melvin Sharp, secretary; Bartley O'Toole and Roy Holland, directors.

With the materials on hand taken into consideration, costs of additional materials and technical help were estimated. The costs per subscriber were computed and memberships fees were assessed at \$1,750 per member.

Enthusiasm of the group was renewed upon agreement that the 60 miles of line could be built with the number of commitments made, but it was stressed that all construction labor would have to be volunteered by the members.

The board immediately went into action to prepare proper papers and documents for rights-of-way. They also began planting poles they had secured from Elko.

The enthusiasm was contagious and the rest of the members joined in the voluntary effort. In a few days every member of the new cooperative was on the job or had hired help to represent his membership.

Construction began near the end of November, continued through the toughest winter in modern history, the crew enduring wind, dust, snow, rain, zero weather and limited tools. On Monday, April 16, they received their reward as the phone line was officially tied into the Nevada Bell system and the wires hummed throughout the day.

Playing an important part in the construction was a 1946 model truck which was mounted with an auger and winch and placed in operating condition to dig the 1050 holes needed for the 60 mile line.

President Testolin knew an experienced telephone construction repairman in Fallon who could be employed to supervise the construction. It didn't take long to get authorization to hire

THE NEW



AUGER AND TRUCK, in hands of willing Reese River volunteers, were used to sink 1050 post holes in cooperative effort to bring new telephone line into area. (Extension Service Photo)



ALL VOLUNTEER LINE CREW worked through snow, sleet, rain, hail and wind through winter months from November to April to complete new Reese River telephone line. Crew shown here is drilling through frozen clay soil at a temperature of four degrees above zero. (Extension Service Photo)

him for the job and the president coordinated the work program with Supt. Gerry Albersson.

Each member of the volunteer crew assumed his place in the work unit doing whatever was necessary. Bart O'Toole took to the operation of the auger unit "like a duck to water" and ran the machine most of the time.

Secretary Melvin Sharp brought his pickup and low boy trailer that was ideal for hauling the 20 foot poles and did about every type of work on the job. John Lytle, range conservationist for the Fallon district of the forest service, was there regularly to offer his talents. Members who could not be there in person but who provided labor were Bill Gandolfo and the Toiyabe Cattle Co.

In one of the first messages over the new line, president Testolin praised the "good humor and fine cooperation among the crew" as he extended thanks

through area extension agent Albright to "the many persons who helped in this voluntary project."



GABBS CLOVER BUDS

We are having fun in Gabbs in the 4-H Clover Buds. We are doing lots of different things. This week we made gingerbread men. To make money we are collecting aluminum cans.

Sandi McDorman, Reporter.

ACTIVE CLOVER BUDS in Gabbs include, from left, David Dinius, Ray Zaval, Jason Geddes, Jeri Horn, Sandi McDorman, Kevin Repp, Tracy Horn, Karen and Kimberly Worthington. (4-H Photo)



TONY TESTOLIN

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FRANCES ANCHO WILLIAMS**PREFACE**

Frances Ancho Williams' parents were born in Spain. Her father came to Elko County, Nevada as a sheepherder to work for the W. T. Jenkins Company. Her mother, who had relatives in Elko County, came with a cousin to be a housekeeper and babysitter. They met and married shortly after their arrival and moved to one of the Jenkins Company ranches where her father was a foreman. Her mother did the cooking for the hay hands and sheep-herders. Frances was the third of five children, and describes their life on the Martin Ranch, one of the biggest Jenkins' ranches, ten miles out of Battle Mountain. Their housing was very old and meager, with no inside plumbing.

Frances' mother, an excellent cook, served a dozen or twenty people at every meal. Frances and her sister Mary learned to bake and cook and help her at an early age. Everyone shared in the chores. She describes school days at the Betty O'Neal Mine in a one-room school, with a mixture of Indian,

Basque and Hispanic students. When Frances was fifteen she received a special driving permit to drive herself and two brothers the ten miles to high school in Battle Mountain. There she met her husband, John Williams. Frances graduated and worked as a cashier at the Nevada Hotel, living with an aunt and uncle in Battle Mountain. John, drafted into the service, came back after two years in the Army, finished his schooling and they were married in 1948. He went to work at one of the mines. Frances was busy taking care of their three sons.

As Director of the busy Senior Citizens Center in a new building built in 1990, Frances has a very responsible and busy career. Hot lunches are served to the seniors, the "Meals on Wheels" program delivers meals to those needing that service, and they assist with counseling regarding medical or housing needs, and many other services. The center provides a place for seniors to socialize, to do crafts, enjoy card games and bingo. Since the staff is limited, Frances handles most of the responsibilities. She still found

the time to take me around to introduce me to prospective narrators for the Lander County Oral History Project.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Frances Williams in her office at the Senior Center, Battle Mountain, Nevada, and the date is March 19, 1993.

Would you give us your full name, your date of birth, and where you were born?

Frances Williams: My name is Frances Ancho Williams. I was born in Battle Mountain, [Nevada], July 23, 1929.

Can you tell us your parents' names, and where they were born, and approximate dates?

My father, Jose Ancho, was born in Navarra, Spain. I have their dates of birth, and I will get it to you later. My mother, Dominga Urriolabietia, was born in Bilboa, Spain.

It would be very interesting to know what brought your parents here to the United States, and then especially to Battle Mountain. And also, did they come separately or were they married?

My father came to the United States when he was twenty-four years old. Actually, he came to the Elko County area, back in the early 1920s. He came to be a sheepherder, because in those days there were a lot of sheep in the state of Nevada, and he came to work for the W.T. Jenkins Company. And also in those days, someone would have to request that they come. And they had to have

permission to get a passport to come to the United States. He came into the Jack Creek area, which is out of Elko County. My mother came to this country in 1921. She had a distant relative that lived in the Jack Creek area, and she and her husband owned a tavern and a restaurant. She came to be a babysitter or a housekeeper. She did housekeeping, she took care of the children, and she also cooked. They both met a short time after they had arrived at this tavern where my mother was working, and were married. I believe the date was 1924. Shortly after that, they moved to one of the W.T. Jenkins Company ranches. He was a foreman and my mother did the cooking. She cooked for the hay hands, the sheepherders, whatever might be coming through at that particular time of year.

Did your mother tell you how old she was when she came to this country, and how old she was when she married?

My mother was twenty-one years old when she came to the United States and twenty-four years old when she married. Like I say, in those days, things were very different than they are now. They went back and forth from Elko to Jack Creek, which is probably maybe 170 miles, and no car. There was a stagecoach or there was a sled in the winter—that's how they went in and out. Very remote country, very primitive country.

Did they ever describe what their living quarters were like when they first started here?

The winters were very, very bitter cold in those days. And of course there was no electricity. I think both of them were very poor. As I remember her telling, coming over on the ship from Spain, they were like cattle, they were so crowded. They had to be all

disinfected, inoculated, and all these horrible things that were like a nightmare, as my mother recalled. No electricity. Of course no gas, you hauled and chopped your own wood, hauled your water, heater your water—very primitive.

Did your mother come alone, or with other family members?

She came with her cousin. She and my mother worked together at Jack Creek, and then later her cousin married another Basque fellow from the Elko area, and she and her husband went into the service station and motel business. Her family, some of them are still living in Elko. But she and my mother were very close, and they had one another for many years, thank goodness, because it was rough.

Now what about the family that both your mother and father left behind? Did they keep in touch? Did they ever see each other again?

They kept in touch by writing. Neither my father or mother ever went and made another trip back to Spain. My sister and older brother have made several trips, but my mother was never able to make the trip.

Did your mother and father learn English quickly? or did they speak to each other in their native tongue? and what was that?

They both spoke Spanish, but mostly Basque. They spoke Basque to the children at home after we were born. And I think probably my sister and I were really the only ones that really spoke fluent Basque. My sister started the first grade in school and could not speak one word of English.

And what about you?

Yes, by the time I came along, we spoke English. So I did not have that problem, but I remember she was a very bright girl. When she started school, she was living in town with another Basque family because we were so far out of town. They were in the same boat she was: Basque and the children could not speak English.

Let's back up a little, because we have the children, and I want to know about their births. Who was first, what are the names of your brothers and sisters—how many were there. So let's go back and start with the first child, each one's name and when they were born—not necessarily the year, but maybe say "two years after," or "three years."

My sister Mary was the first born. Then came my brother Joe, and they were just about eleven months apart. Then I came along, I think it was five years later. And then I have a younger brother, Tony, and he is four years younger than I am. And then George came along, and I think he is five years younger again.

So that was a pretty big family. Tell me when you can first remember what it was like in a big family like that on a sheep ranch, and what was the environment.

We actually were not on a sheep ranch. It was a ranch with lots of cattle and horses. However, there were very large bands of sheep that this company also ran. And in the fall and in the spring they would go through the ranch that we lived on. So in the wintertime, lots of times we would have as many as a dozen shepherders, camp tenders, that my mother cooked for, of course, and they would stay there during the winter. And then in the summer, of course, it was the haying crew and the buckaroos—a lot of cowboys.

Were your parents in charge of that camp?

They lived on several ranches before I was born, but the last ranch they spent most of their years on was the Martin Ranch, which is about ten miles out of Battle Mountain. It was probably one of the biggest ranches in the outfit, and my father was the manager, responsible for all of this.

And what was your housing like on that ranch?

We had a very *old* house. It had not many bedrooms, but in those days they improvised and put up a wail here and took down a wail there. Very meager. It was cold. We had a potbellied stove in the living room, and a huge wood-burning stove in the kitchen—my mother cooked everything on the wood-burning stove. We all learned to cook on the wood-burning stove. The winters were very cold. We had an outhouse, no inside plumbing. We hauled all of our water. In the later years we did have a pump where we could pump water in the kitchen. In the winter and the rest of the time we hauled water for everything.

Now you say “we hauled water.” How old were the children when they had to start helping with some of these hard chores?

I remember I was very, very young when we had to haul the wood, fill the woodshed. Every night when we came home from school we hauled in the wood and the coal, if there was any. I was not allowed to haul water probably until I was maybe in the fourth or fifth grade, because we dipped the water out of a big cement thing and it was a little bit hazardous. [chuckles]

Amazing! Can you remember what it looked like inside the house? Even if meager, what kind

of furniture there was? Besides the potbellied stove, what was on the floor or windows? Describe the place to us.

Wood floors. The walls, I never will forget, the kitchen, my mother always had a very hard problem because she was very, very clean, always cleaning. And the covering on the wail was like an oil cloth, I suppose maybe prior to the wallpaper. And we decided to paint it one day, and we used the old calcimine paint, and I’m sure a lot of you have never heard of calcimine. It was a horrible mess, but we did get it, and it was clean for a few years. Our bedrooms, some of them had a piece of linoleum, otherwise just the wood floor. We had no heat in the bedroom areas. It was really, really roughing it. People would not really understand,

Why did it have to be so rugged when your father’s position was so important? Or is that how everyone lived then?

Everyone was in the same position that we were, everyone.

Tell me a little bit about mealtim what you ate, who fixed it, and how everyone coped with such a large family in such a rustic environment.

My mother did all the cooking until my sister and I were old enough to learn to bake and cook and help her. We always served. There were five children and the two of them, and I don’t think we ever sat down to a meal that there weren’t a dozen or twenty people, by the time you figured—in all the hands. My mother was an excellent cook. Of course we raised our own beef on the ranch. We had poultry and pigs and everything. Raised our own vegetables—huge garden—and she canned a lot of the vegetables. So we had very

good food, very hearty food: steaks and stews, and you know, lamb, roast lamb, and just very, very good meals. We never wanted, we always had our own eggs and our own chickens, our own milk. My father milked twice a day. So we really had very good food.

Describe a typical day's meals, what the food was. Let's pick one typical day—not Sunday—breakfast, lunch or supper—whatever you called it—tell me and tell me what was served.

In the mornings there was always a variety. We had usually a hot oatmeal. Depending on if they had freshly butchered a beef or something, we would have liver, eggs, pancakes. Maybe another time we would have fried potatoes and eggs and your pancakes. They cured all their own hams, all their own bacons. So we would have ham or bacon and of course lots of coffee and lots of milk. For lunch, as I remember, my mother made wonderful soups, and we usually had soup. And then you would have maybe a stew with lots of vegetables. Always homemade bread—she did all of her own baking. And then there would be beans. She never could go a day without making beans [laughs]—beans or rice, and then we always either had a pudding or a pie. And then for dinner again we'd have steak: beef steak, T-bones, French fries, possibly corn on the cob, fried zucchini. And usually for dessert then we would have cake.

It sounds like your mother cooked from morning until night.

She did. She'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and work 'til dark at night.

And then everyone probably did, right? If you served and everyone had to clear. Tell me about

what the rest of the family was doing while she was cooking. I know your dad was busy, but tell me about the rest of the family.

Like I say, at an early age, my sister and I especially, would help with the serving. The men, when they got through, everyone would take their plates and set them on the kitchen table and then we would scrape and have to do dishes. The boys, before they got old enough to work on the ranch, they helped with the dishes, and that was always a battle because nobody wanted to do dishes. We all wanted to wipe and not wash and that kind of stuff. But we all pitched in, we all did.

Tell me a little bit about the clothing. Did you buy store-bought clothing? Did you sew your own clothing? And if you did buy it, where did you go?

My mother never was much of a seamstress. She could darn socks, and that was about it. Battle Mountain always had a dry goods store. And they sold everything from bedding to shoes, Levis. Levis jeans and things like, that everyone wore, even the children. When we went to school, we did have to wear dresses—we were not allowed to wear pants. But it was just basic, skirts and pants.

How did you do the laundry? how did you keep the clothing clean?

The good old scrubboard, for many years. Later years, they did buy a Maytag washer that was used outside because it had a terrible exhaust system, and it was very noisy, and it had a wringer. So once a week we washed. And if there was anything in between, you did it by hand.

Who is "we"?

My mother and my sister and myself.
[laughs]

And I guess you “gals,” and your mom did the cleaning?

Yes. I remember sweeping the old wood floors, and I had a lot of allergies at that time. And I would have to sweep and clean on Saturdays, because during the school days we didn't have much time. But, oh, it was awful because the dust was so bad!

Now I want to talk about school when the first one in your family, and then when you started school, where did you go?

We all started school—the first three of us—went to school at the Betty O' Neal Mine. I went there for the first four years of my school years. My father would take us up, because there were no buses. He would drive us up to the mouth of the canyon. At that time Nobel Getchell had a beautiful home there. And he would take us to there and then we would walk. I think it was probably maybe a couple of miles to the campsite where the school was located. And then we would walk back to the mouth of the canyon after school, and he would pick us up. In the wintertime, sometimes he would take us to school on Monday morning and we'd not see him again until the weekend because we were snowed in and he was snowed out. So we stayed with the teacher.

From your earliest recollection, describe your school day: when you got there, how many children, what you studied, what your teacher was like, who were the children in your classroom, was there a mixture of ethnic groups—describe your early school days.

We had a one-room, one classroom school. There were no facilities. We had a bucket of water with a pail. The schoolteacher, some of them, there was a small room off to the side where she would spend the week and then come to Battle Mountain on the weekends. She taught all eight grades, and there was a very definite mixture of ethnic groups. We had Indians, we had the Basque, we had Hispanic. It was very interesting, and I feel that we learned a lot—possibly more in those days than the children do now in their separate classrooms.

Tell me how you were taught, how did the teacher teach children from so many classrooms, and what kinds of materials—books or papers or chalkboard—describe how you were taught.

We had books—not an awful lot, you know a variety, like a separate geography book or a history book. They were kind of combined. We had a blackboard and she put a lot of her work on the blackboard. She would have different periods for each class: like the first grade, second grade, on up through the eighth grade. She did not always have all eight grades at one time. Each year there would be a mixture. There was a lot of extra time she would spend with each child, each different class. We also did a lot of work on the board. As far as papers and pencils and that, we did not have much of that. Lots of times if the families could afford it, then they would supplement and buy for their own children—otherwise it was pretty skimpy.

How many children were there in the classrooms? How far did it vary, and what were the least and the most in a classroom?

Probably about from ten to twelve children. At different periods of time there

were more, and I don't think probably there was more than twenty, altogether, at one time.

So that, compared to today's big classes, gave a little more individual attention? Were the children pulled out of school when there were special chores or ranching to be done?

I don't remember that as a child. If there was a period maybe during the winter, like the roads were bad or something, the children might not be brought to school because they simply could not get there. But as far as staying home to help with the chores and that, no, I do not remember that.

Tell me about holiday celebrations, and were there any specific ones that the Basques celebrate that we may not know about?

We basically celebrated mostly what the American people do. I think by the time I came along and could remember, I think my parents were pretty much, you know... There were holidays that my mother always spoke of, but we did not actually celebrate them as such. We might mention them and talk about them, but we never actually did anything special. I think Christmas and Thanksgiving were probably our biggest.

And tell how you celebrated it.

Well, I remember we had the traditional turkey or goose—whatever we decided we wanted. I remember the first Christmas tree we ever had. We went and cut our own, of course, in those days—the native pine. There were no electric lights, of course, and we had candles. And when I say “candles,” they were candles, like a birthday candle, only they were a Christmas candle in a little holder that clamped onto your branch. And we were

allowed only a certain period in the evening when we were supervised, to light those candles, because of the fire hazard. Sometimes at Christmastime it wasn't just family, it was whoever happened to be on the ranch at that particular time. So we all celebrated in this big, big front room with a long table with the benches. Of course we heard about Santa Claus, but it wasn't stressed like it is these days. Lots of food. I don't remember a lot of drinking or that kind of stuff—just a lot of special foods.

Were there exchanges of gifts?

Yes, always.

What kind?

Mostly clothing. We had a lot of fruit when we were children, but most of it was the dried fruit. We would come to town, and the school system in Battle Mountain at that time had a Santa Claus, and we always looked forward to the bags that they would give children, because they always contained a huge, fresh orange.

So that was a treat?

That was a treat, yes, it really was.

Now let's move from elementary school... Well, I think here your elementary went through eighth grade. And then where did you go to high school?

We came to Battle Mountain to high school. By this time my sister was in college, and we drove ten miles a day. My oldest brother drove us in daily. When he was in high school, he was drafted into the Service, so I received a special permit when I was

fifteen to drive myself and my two brothers into Battle Mountain every day. We were allowed to drive into the outskirts of town. The building is still there. I think it's called now "Not Just Antiques," and my uncle and aunt owned a dry goods store there. I was allowed to drive the car, park it in the back in the alley, and then walk clear across town, in the snow, to school. I was not allowed to drive *in* town.

How did it feel when you first were able to leave to go to high school and get away from the ranch for a little bit?

I always felt like I lived in a different world, because there weren't many of us at that time, like me, that lived ten miles out of town. We carried our lunch, a cold lunch, every day. And it was a little bit hard for some of my friends to understand. You know, I didn't live in town, and life was very different for me. We walked back to the car, went home, and back to our chores and that sort of thing. But we didn't seem to mind.

When I interviewed Louis Lemaire this morning, he talked about after-school activities, and I said to him, "Well when the young people came in to go to school who lived away, they missed all those activities." Were you able to participate in evening events, or dances?

We had a theater in Battle Mountain at that time. I never was allowed to come in to a show until I was almost out of high school. The last couple of years, probably junior and senior year, I was allowed to come in for very special occasions. I also did play on the basketball team, which was just beginning, actually. But that was just about it. We used to have Tuesday Night Socials, and it was very rare if I could come

in, because I was not allowed to, again—I was old enough—but I was not allowed to travel alone at night.

How did you feel when you were a teenager and couldn't participate in those things?

Well, I don't think I really resented it. I think when I was a senior, I would come in occasionally and spend the weekend at my aunt and uncle's house. I loved to dance, I always liked to dance. I enjoyed that, but other than that, I don't think I felt I was missing anything.

Was there recreation time at the ranch? Were there friends there? What did you do for some fun?

We were the only family with children on the ranch and we made our own fun. We did a lot of things, made or improvised. My brothers were kind of handy and we'd make sling shots and we'd go out and target shoot. And we played a lot in the loft of the barn. We did a lot of fishing, a lot of hiking, a lot of wading in the creeks and that sort of stuff. And tagged along with my father lots of times when he was doing things. We rode horses. I always enjoyed riding horses. I had a couple of brothers that were very *daring*; they used to like to ride the donkeys. We always had in the wintertime, we had either little leppie lambs that we fed by the bottle.

What kind of lambs?

[laughs] "Leppies" is what we would call them. I don't know if there is such a word. [laughs] I suppose you would call them like the little "runts" or the ones that were very weak and couldn't nurse. We also had colts like that, and calves. Many times the lambs

would break their legs and we'd help my father put the splints on and wrap them and nurse them back to health. And we always enjoyed those kind of things.

Did your mother ever have any fun?

My mother probably never came to town more than twice a year: Christmastime always, to do a little bit of Christmas shopping. She never seemed to have much of a desire to go a lot. She had a lot of Basque friends in Battle Mountain that we would come in and visit with. But it seemed like on Sundays a lot of the Basque people would come out and visit us and they would have dinner with us and visit. She seemed to be very—she was a homebody person, and didn't really require a lot of...In those days, people were very different.

Everyone had to eat and maybe she was such a caring mother, even if she wanted to go, she wanted to make sure everyone had their meals?

Yes, it was very hard to leave when you have all these people, you know, depending on you. She really couldn't get away a lot of times. Lots of times they'd plan a Sunday maybe where she wasn't going to fix a large meal, just be the family, and invariably there would be someone—a carload or a pickup—load somebody coming—and she'd have to fix dinner.

That was a hard life. Now, tell me more about your high school years. And when you finished high school, where did your life then lead you? Were you still at the ranch?

Yes, my folks were still at the ranch when I graduated from high school. I came into town and worked. My husband and I got married.

You're going too fast! You haven't even told me you met a man you fell in love with! [laughter] So let's back up here.

My husband was in high school the same time I was. When his step-father passed away, he had to quit school. It was a large family and he was kind of in the middle of the brood, and he had to quit school to go to work to support his family. He worked in a gas station. Then, actually, when I first met him and we started dating, he was a sophomore, and he was drafted into the Service. So I graduated and he came back after his two years in the Army, and then he finished his schooling, and then we were married. But prior to that, I had worked a very short time, as a cashier at the Nevada Hotel.

And when you finished high school, was there a graduation ceremony?

Yes, I think there were ten of us that graduated my senior year. In those days, it was customary that the seniors put on a play. We had caps and gowns, and it was a very brief ceremony.

Then you said you went to work for a while at the Nevada Hotel. Did you live in town?

I stayed with my aunt and uncle again.

Now tell me, who were your aunt and uncle? Who were they?

His name was Victor Urriola, and my aunt's name was Concha. He has since passed on, she's still in the Ruby Manor in Elko. I spent many hours with them if I had to stay over in town for a specific reason or something—we always stayed with them.

Did you stay there all through the week when you worked at the Nevada Hotel, and then did you go home weekends?

Uh-huh, I did.

Did you start to make friends and have a more active life when you were working in Battle Mountain?

At that time our town was very small, so most of my friends were friends that I knew in school, because in those days the population stayed pretty much the same, and it was just basically the natives.

Now, I want to know a couple of things: What were the years when you were working there? and what was the population? and tell me a little bit of what Battle Mountain was like when you were working in that time period.

Just a guess: There were probably just several thousand people in Battle Mountain at that particular time. The Nevada Hotel, of course, is one of the oldest establishments. Basically, it was the ranching. In those days, there were a lot of sheep in this area. Cattle, the cowboys. I think probably there was the Nevada Club and maybe the Owl, the only restaurants in town. It seemed like we had some transients. I can remember the gypsies that used to go through. Even as a child, the gypsies used to travel all the back roads, the country roads. We as children were very fascinated with them. But we learned at a very early age that we had to be very careful, because while they were busy talking to us children and wooing us, there were others doing, you know. They had a very bad reputation, you couldn't trust them. They would take anything they could get their hands on. They seemed to be coming through periodically.

Can you tell me more about these [gypsies], because I have not heard of them in the region at all, no one has mentioned them, so I want you to be very descriptive. Again, try to tell me the time period, what years these were, how long they came through here, what did they look like? where did they come from? what did they travel in? what were they doing? how long did they stay in this area? Because like with me, I don't know if anyone knows about them in this region.

I'm sure there are others who know, they probably just have forgotten, because they were very common in this area. As long as I can remember, the gypsies always came by and always stopped at the ranch. And you could spot them when they came, because they always had these—the cars in those days were very primitive, but they were typically what you would think a gypsy would be—lots of jewelry, very, kind of like the flamenco dancers, the skirts and the long dresses, long black hair. We have talked—just recently, in fact, at work, we were talking about this, and I really don't know where they originated, what nationality they were, except that they were dark and very pretty. We used to be fascinated with the women, because they dressed so, you know, we thought, lots of jewelry and lots of dangly earrings. They had lots of tapestries, and they were always trying to sell you something, and taking just as much as they could get their hands on also. They always needed food, wanted to be fed, and my mother was always very kind and generous to them, but by the same token, there was always a fear of them. In fact, there's still evidently some going through the area, because not too awfully long ago, in Winnemucca, they hit one of the jewelry stores there and made off with a lot of jewelry.

That's interesting. I wonder if there are any pictures of them? Okay, so now we're back at the Nevada Hotel, and then your husband comes home from the war. What war was that?

World War II. He spent two years. And he finished his schooling and then we were married.

First of all, tell me, I want to know a little bit about when you got married, if you had a ceremony, where it was, and then where you lived and how your early married life started, what it was like.

We had a very simple marriage at the church, just family and very close friends. Just a very simple cake and reception. We didn't really take a honeymoon. He went to work immediately at one of the mines. The first two years after we were married my folks were still on the ranch, but it was like a year or so later that they moved into town. But for those two years, my two younger brothers lived with me and my husband and stayed and went to school during the week and then went home for the weekend again.

How old were they then?

Let's see, both of them were still in grade school. They were quite small. I think maybe the oldest one was probably sixth or seventh grade. And we kept them for two years.

That must have been difficult in a new marriage, to have your brothers there. How did your husband handle it? Or did everyone do things like that here?

It was nothing unusual. I mean we were just used to that sort of thing. And the job he had at that time was out of town, so he was

gone lots of times five days a week, and then would come home for the weekends.

I know I'm going to be interviewing your husband, but tell me, just generally, without detail, what his work was.

He was working at what they called Gold Acres, which is out by Crescent Valley, the Beowawe area. There wasn't really enough work for him at that particular year, 1948, one of the worst winters we've probably ever had. At that time they had to feed the cattle with bombers. And he drove hay trucks so far out to feed the animals, and then the bombers would go beyond that point and drop the hay to the cattle. So he spent most of his time coming and going during that winter. And then I remember every morning we'd get up and our water pipes would be frozen. This is my first year of marriage! [laughs] You'd get them thawed and fixed by evening, and the next morning you went through the same thing again. And then after that he was offered a job at the gold dredge, which I'm sure he'll be telling you about, and he went to work there as office manager.

Sounds like a very busy, difficult life. Did you have time for any fun?

Oh yes! We never missed a dance. [laughs] In those days, Battle Mountain used to always have a very formal New Year's Bail, and always on St. Patrick's day was another very nice dance where we all dressed up in new clothes, and it was the beginning of spring. And yes, we did have time for fun. And we had a theater, so we did do a lot of things.

Where were the dances held?

Where the Silver Dollar Saloon sits now there was a huge old Shovelin Theater. When we had our dances, they moved all the chairs out, swept the floor, spiffed it up, and we danced! He also had a hardware store at that time, and he also owned the theater.

Did you go to the theater too?

Oh, yes. During high school, when I could get away, we always went to the theater.

Were you still working?

No, I did not work after I was married.

Do you have a family?

Yes, we had three sons. We were married I think about three years before we had our first boy. That was John Junior. He is forty-two years old. He still lives in Battle Mountain. My middle son was about two-and-a-half years later. He was born and his name is Tony. He's in the Reno area in the insurance business. And my youngest son, Joe, is also in Reno, and he is working at the Pyrenees Restaurant and bar there.

Is that a Basque restaurant?

Yes, it is.

Let's get back to your mom and dad a little bit: How long did they stay on the ranch? Did they move into Battle Mountain?

My dad's health began to fail, and I think they moved into Battle Mountain in 1950. He got himself a part-time job at one of the local bars. He had had several—at that time we thought—heart attacks. Evidently, we have discovered later, he probably had the angina

type of heart problems, and he did have three heart attacks and died, actually, quite young. My mother lived twenty-some years after he died, alone.

Where was their home and what was her life like when she was away from the ranch? I hope it got easier and that she had enjoyable older years, even though she was alone.

She did. They bought a small home in Battle Mountain, and she loved to garden, she loved flowers. After he was gone, that was her life—that and her grandchildren. She always had a real nice garden, beautiful flowers, and immaculate yard, and immaculate house [laughs], but yes, she did enjoy, although it was lonely, she had most of her children: three out of the five were living in Battle Mountain, so she had lots of family around her.

Did she also still have Basque friends that she could be with?

Yes, she did.

When they were together, did they speak English, or did they speak their native tongue?

She and my father, or her friends? Basque. And then when some of the older Basque people passed away, it seemed like their children always seemed to be very good to my mother. They were always very close. My mother never really felt that she could speak English very well. My father did really well, learned the language and became a naturalized citizen. But my mother was always basically very shy, and she thought her English was not good, but she spoke, I thought, quite well.

I want to know a little bit more about the Indians. I understand that they integrated in

the schools, but I want to know more about, if you can tell me, what brought them here? did they work in all the areas everyone worked? did they live in a separate community? Tell me a little more about them.

My first encounter with the Indians, when I first started the first grade, was at the Betty O'Neal School. There was a family there of the Barredos and they had—as I remember, she had, I think, nine children, but several of them had died in early infancy. One of the boys happened to be in my class, another one was a year older. But my sister went to school and she had one in her class. And so we knew them very, very well. When I moved to Battle Mountain, there was a period when they had an Indian school which was directly behind the grade school. By the time I came into Battle Mountain, they had integrated—we were all in the same classrooms. Most of them, like Mr. Barredo, was in the mining. As a child, a lot of the Indian people worked on the ranches, sometimes just during the summer months, haying and stuff like that. But basically, those were the only two...Some of them worked probably on the railroad. But they were here. It seemed like they just have always been here. There were a lot of the Hispanics also. And we were just always used to them. You know, they were just part of our life and we thought nothing of it. A lot of the people that used to come in to visit, or maybe that we would encounter out of town, they'd say, "Oh my, aren't you afraid because you have Indians? You go to school with these Indians?! Aren't they mean? And aren't you afraid they may scalp you?" or things like this. They had no idea.

Were there a lot of intermarriages? Did they start to intermarry?

Yes. There were a lot.

You said you had three sons. How long did your brothers live with you?

My brothers, when they went to school, just went for two years. Then my older brother, of course, was in the Service. He was wounded in France, and after he came back, he went to school and became a pharmacist and moved to Idaho. He's still living there. The other two brothers are still in Battle Mountain, and my sister lives in Carson City. I had the three sons, and the one is still here. I never had a daughter, but I have four granddaughters, so that kind of made up for it. [chuckles]

One of the things that I was wondering, and I've asked others: When it came to the war period and the young boys especially went to Service and the young women and men went off to college, how many then went on to work and live in other parts of the United States? Many I see, like yours and some of the others I've talked to, have come back home to the Battle Mountain area. What was it like, wartime and after college days? How many stayed away? I can't say percentages, but tell me what you observed.

Most of them came back to Battle Mountain. I think some of the younger ones moved on, but I think the majority came back to Battle Mountain.

And I've noticed such close family ties in this area, which I've been thinking about. It's rare today, in other places, for young people to stay close to their family home. Tell me what you think creates that.

I think it goes back to the way we were raised. When we were children, nobody had

much in those days. Life was hard, people worked hard in the mining, in the ranching, and that was pretty much the way of life for everybody. And I think we were a small town, we knew everybody, we kind of watched out for everybody. We were always very close in school. I think that's where it all comes down to, the way we were raised. I think people worked hard, they played hard, they went to church on a regular basis, and we were just taught the basic...you know, that I don't think any of us have forgotten.

Do you think your grandchildren's lives will be different? Or do you think they will stay or go on to other kinds of lives? Not just your grandchildren, but this third generation.

Just from what I'm observing, my grandchildren are still quite young. My oldest one is in the first year of college. But I think the generation that's just a little bit older than them, I see a big difference. I remember as a child, we never spoke to an older person that we were not told, "it's either 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.'" It was *never* a first name. You never said "Hi" it was Hello, Mrs. So-and-So, or Hello Mr. So-and-So." I don't see that any more. I see a lot of the younger children do not have the respect. They don't feel they have an obligation to anybody or anything in a lot of cases—not all—but I see a lot of this, where I think it was totally different when I was a child, *totally* different.

There have been many, many changes, so I want you to talk about from the time you married—and I know then Highway 80 came in, mines came and went, the county seat was moved here. Tell us about the changes as your family was growing up and you were able to see the ups and downs of Battle Mountain with new

people and new businesses coming in. Tell us a little bit about that.

Mining is a cycle. Years ago, when my husband worked at the gold mine, that mine originally was a copper mine. There was also gold, but mostly copper. He worked there as a child—his family worked there. It's a cycle. The mine was closed down, then the gold dredge came in, and then it closed down after so many yen. Now, in the last five or six, eight years, it's been gold again. There's been a lot of people coming and going—not always the best type of people. Basically Battle Mountain used to be very friendly. You could go off and leave your house unlocked, your cars unlocked. It's just been the last maybe five-eight years that we've not been able to do that. I think mining has been very good to Battle Mountain in lots of ways. Other ways, the town has grown in the last so many years, and it has not been a good growth. I mean, the people have not really felt very secure and very good about a lot of the changes that came in with these new people. We've had people from Idaho, Colorado, all over—and you take the good with the bad. The highway, at one particular time I think caused a lot of people a lot of concern because it bypassed us. And there really isn't a lot to draw the people off the freeway into Battle Mountain. We've not had a lot of new industry come in, as far as gift shops or...As a child I always remember we always had a clothing store. You could buy shoes. We were pretty self-sufficient. Not any more. And I don't know what's kept it out. There's been a lot of rumors that our local businesspeople have kept them out. I don't know, but we just never have grown in that area where I think that we should have.

When the county seat moved here, what changes did you observe since people come for those

meetings, like I'm staying out at the Holiday Inn Express, and it was at commissioner time and I saw lots of people staying there that must have come from other areas. Has that given a little boost to the economy and to what's happening here in Battle Mountain?

Yes. For years the county seat was in Austin, and the greater population was always in Battle Mountain. It was a bitter, bitter fight. They had tried several other times unsuccessfully. Austin had had some hard times, but it got to the point where Battle Mountain was the larger populated area, and it should have been here years ago. They worked very hard—in fact, I worked on those committees, getting petitions. And it caused a lot of hard feelings among our own local people, because some people felt Austin *needed* the courthouse, because they didn't have much else at that particular time going for them. Yet, it was hard for the majority of the people that needed to do business, to go back and forth to Austin. So after it was actually moved to Battle Mountain, yes, it did, it created a lot of jobs for a lot of our people. And I don't think anybody can dispute that it's being handled a lot better, because Austin kind of...you know, kind of did their own thing. You might go up there at ten o'clock to do business in the courthouse and it would not be open that day. And to this day, there are some very hard feelings among a lot of those people up there, and I'm sure when you go up there, you will hear about it. So it really has been good for Battle Mountain. And I think it has brought a lot more people from the outlying areas.

I want to go back: I know the railroad may be earlier than your recollections of its impact, but if you can tell us anything about the impact

of the railroad...you know, I've never seen so many freight cars in my life [chuckles] in one long train! And the constancy. Can you tell me a little bit about the shipping that's going on and the affect of the improvement of the railroad in this region?

I can remember the railroad as a child, because on a good day, when we lived ten miles out of town, we could hear the whistle, the old steam engines. And the mining, like the barium I think especially, there was a lot of, a *lot* of it going out by rail. Now, it's mostly trucks. They come in with trucks and haul a lot of that. And that has been for years. In the early years, the railroad I think was probably our biggest—I don't remember a lot of food trucks, freight trucks or anything like that. With the sheep in those years, the depot would be just packed with wool sacks, and they all went out by rail. Later on when my children got into school, there were a lot of passenger trains, and I used to love riding the train. We used to take the circus train to Reno, and all the children would go on the circus train. We haven't had passenger trains. The Amtrak goes through, but very few people ride it here, because you can't catch it here. You have to either go to North Battle Mountain or Carlin or Winnemucca. So the trains have been on the decline for many years.

Well what's in all those cars on these huge long freight trains?

They're not from Battle Mountain. I mean, there's very little, I think, that actually goes out of here on train or comes in by train. It's mostly trucks.

I know that from my reading and some of my interviews, that organization life has been very,

very important in Battle Mountain: all kinds of organizations—the Elks, the Masons, I'm sure there's women's clubs. What can you tell us? Have you or your husband been active?

There are a lot of service clubs the Masons, I don't know that they have an Elks Club—not to my knowledge. The Rainbow. There's been Women in Mining, Business and Professional Women (BPW), Lions Club. I think probably one of our most active ones is the Lions Club. My husband has been a charter member for forty-some years. And they *do*, I think, they and probably the BPW, which is now disbanded. The Lions Club is an international association of the Lions Club. And everything they make or do is strictly local community oriented. They have built track fields, football fields softball, baseball fields for the children. They buy *numerous* pairs of glasses for older people, young children—people that can't afford. They have done an awful lot of good in the local area, and they're still doing it.

Let's talk a little bit about the health services in Battle Mountain. And I want to go back, real, real early when you were a child, when you still lived on the ranch, when your mother had the children. Tell me about that.

We always seemed to have a doctor. Maybe it was just one. And I remember as a child we had several very good doctors. Of course in those days, the doctor did everything: he set a broken leg, or if you had pneumonia, or if there was a baby being born, or whatever. If there was a case he couldn't handle, they just sent you to Elko or Winnemucca. And the closest there would be fifty-two miles. Also as a child, I remember my brother George one summer contracted an infectious disease, tularemia. Usually you pick it up from a mosquito that has bitten a wood tick, or else

you pick up the wood tick, and that's what he did. And in those days, of course, very little was known about it. And so he was sick the entire summer, into the fall. They could not figure out what was wrong with him. And finally this little old country doctor—and he was an old little gentleman—discovered that he had about the size of a dime, a circle on the top of his hand here. Fortunately, by reading his books and stuff, he discovered what that was, so he was able to help him. But we had very good doctors. He would drive the ten miles out to see us. We had scarlet fever, we had the mumps, we had everything, and of course we were always quarantined, but the doctor drove ten miles put to take care of us.

When your mother had the children, tell me, was there a doctor, or where did she have the children in the family?

All of us children were born right here in Battle Mountain. There was a small little hospital and our same little doctor, and she had every one of her children in the hospital.

Tell me then, through the other years—because some have told me that there wasn't good health care or doctors, so I don't know what period—so when you married and had your children, and then move along and tell me about the kind of health care, because several people have told me it was lacking—even the interview earlier today with Louis Lemaire.

When I had my children we had a very good doctor. He was probably sicker than most of his patients lots of times. But he made house calls. All of my children were born locally. He at that time did tonsillectomies, set bones. Then probably somewhere, I'd say maybe down in the sixties, there was a period when we had a very, very hard time getting

a doctor to stay, getting a doctor to come in, so we relied very heavily on the Elko doctors. Then even after we had some coming in, a lot of us went out of town because you simply, you know, could not get in to see them, or they were not here, or they'd be gone and no one to take their place. And there were some periods, yes, and we had some very bad times.

What's the situation like now?

We have come a long way. There was a time not too long ago—maybe four or five years ago—when there was a possibility we were going to lose our hospital. Financial problems, a lot of it. Not just financially, it was poor administration. We couldn't get any doctors to come in and stay. They tried contracting the doctors, paying them, and of course they would work what they wanted to work. They were getting paid *anyway*, so, you know. But I think in the last, maybe in the last two or three years now, things have seemed to stabilize. We have a very good staff, we have a clinic. We also have a very good public health nurse. Now just recently, the Elko doctors have quit coming in here, but they were coming in on a regular basis, certain ones, and spending so many days here. But we're pretty self-sufficient right now, and I hope it stays that way.

I was very interested, when I was looking through the Chamber of Commerce directory, to see that there was a woman dentist. And then I went to interview, and someone was going to the dentist, and she was raving about her and how busy she was. Tell me, do you know what brought her here, and a little bit about that, and when she came.

We have had dentists oft and on through the years—the last ten or fifteen years. This

particular dentist I'm not too familiar with. She was working with another dentist that was coming in, but he, I understand, now is not coming anymore. So she is strictly on her own and I'm sure she's very, very busy. But no, we've not had dentists. You know, for years and years we never had a dentist. We, there again, traveled out of town. And this gal, I don't know. Like I say, I'm sure she's very busy now. She's the only one.

Now I know that you're the director of the senior center, so before we end the interview, tell me when they started that, about how many come, and just a kind of a feeling for the kind of a senior center. There are senior centers everywhere, but I want to know a little bit about this one which would be unique, because everyone knows each other. So tell me about it.

The first senior center came into Battle Mountain in 1972. At that particular time, they decided there was a need. There was no place—we didn't have a building or any place for it. So the Catholic priest at that time offered the church hall. So for several years, that's where they operated from, and there was just a commercial stove, a commercial refrigerator. It was kind of hard, because we didn't have a dishwasher. We had probably at that time maybe twenty or thirty seniors. Then they got their first grant, brought in a trailer, and they outgrew that. So in 1990 we built a brand new senior center that we are now occupying. We've been in it for two years. We serve a hot lunch for the seniors. We have around forty people we feed daily in the center, and we have another thirty that we deliver meals to—Meals on Wheels." It not only is just a nutrition center she—anything to do with the seniors, any of the services, or any help or assistance they need, comes through us: transportation to go shopping, go to the

doctor, or whatever their needs might be. And we're unique, as you say, we are small. We have no social worker, we have no assistants. I am the director, I have a bookkeeper, I have two books and a van driver. Most of everything is done just by me, because my bookkeeper only works half a day. Most of the other sites have a social worker. But we're a very limited staff, and we do everything. We fill out the fuel assistance programs for them. If they need counseling, if they need help with their housing, or medical—anything. It's all there.

Tell me how the cooking is done.

We have probably one of the nicest and best-equipped kitchens in Battle Mountain. I mean, any of the people in the restaurants will tell you that. It's beautiful. We have a cook and an assistant cook. We are federally funded, with some funds from our county. Right now the county is putting in more money than the federal. We have USDA commodity foods that are given to us. We have a very, actually very liberal, and a nice variety. We have chicken, we have ham, we have beef, turkey, fish—and it's all prepared fresh daily. They make all their own breads and pastries, by hand, fresh. All the things that we may not serve in one particular day we take and freeze in nice little compartments, and then we send those out to the homebound people for their weekends so that they don't have to cook, because a lot of them are not able to cook.

Who plans the menus? And again, tell me how many are doing this work?

We have two in the kitchen that do the cooking. The cooks make up the menus, then they are approved by a committee that we have on our project council, and then they are sent into the state, Carson City. They have

to be approved and meet specifications by the state dietician, and then they are sent back to us and then we are allowed to serve them.

The people who come, are there a mixture of the ethnic groups? Do some of them come for sociability? Tell me about these forty people. And is it the same usually every day?

Basically, you do have. We actually have probably right around a hundred unduplicated people that we serve through the period of a year. They're not always the same, but basically you do have a certain amount that are the same people every day. We do strive to target the ethnic minorities, the low income. And we do have quite a variety with the Hispanics, the Indian, the Basque. So we do have, yeah, a real good variety, a mixture of people. And a lot of them come in because our donation is \$1.25 and they get a huge meal, so actually they save money by doing this. A lot of them come in for social reasons. A lot of them come in to do crafts, just to get out of the house, talk to somebody, visit with the people that have the same problems they might have.

When you said crafts, are there card games and other social activities? And who leads the crafts and other activities?

We have an advisory project council board and we have committees. They do crafts for fund raisers. Some of the things they do, like right now we're in the process of making Memorial Day wreaths that we sell, and they do very well on that. They do a lot of latch hook rugs, they do embroidery, crocheting, painting. We have some very, very [chuckles] very staunch bridge players. My! they'll just play bridge at the drop of a hat! [laughs] And we play bingo. A lot of the homebound people

come in for that. They play cribbage, pinochle, just about anything they want to do.

What are the hours that It's open?

Seven [7:00 a.m.] to three [3.00 p.m.]. And they can come and go anytime they want. They can come in and sit and watch television, visit, whatever they want to do.

Don't tell me you have to be there at seven!?

The cooks are there at seven, I go in about a quarter to eight. But that doesn't mean that I'm through at three. Like last night, I made three trips over because we also rent out the building after hours, and the monies we get from that is put back into our program, either to buy supplies or whatever we might need.

Are there more women than men, or is it pretty equal?

More women than men. Yes, very definitely. Very few couples. It's, you know, usually one or the other is gone.

Before we end the interview, is there anything that I forgot to ask that relates specifically to the Battle Mountain region and what people would be interested in knowing when they're studying this area?

I can't think of anything right offhand. I may later! [chuckles]

Do you think we've covered It?

I think so, uh-huh, pretty well.

Well, on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Program, I thank you not only for the interview, but for all that you have done

to help the project by taking me around, helping determine the people who should be interviewed, and taking me around to introduce me to the prospective narrators, I couldn't be doing what I'm doing without your help, so thank you for everything.

FRANCES ANCHO WILLIAMS

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PREFACE

John Williams, born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1926, was two months old when his mother and stepfather moved to Nevada. A miner, his stepdad had an opportunity to go into gold and copper mining at a little place called Gold Top. John was just a tot when he started helping his stepdad dig out the rock, run it through a sluice box and clean up the gold. It was during the Depression and they bought their groceries with gold.

The family of seven children lived in a small house in the mining camp with a population of twenty-five to thirty people. The children all shared in the chores—the boys packing water up a hill in 5-gallon buckets all day long on wash day and cutting wood. The girls helped with dishes and house chores. When John was six, they moved to Copper Canyon. His stepfather became mine foreman, in charge of all mining operations. Home was a large tent built up wooden walls and a wooden floor, until the wind blew it down and they found a house to rent. Housing

was very limited. And the miners worked hard and drank hard. This was underground mining and his father died at the age of forty-two from breathing the silicon dust that “just ate his lungs up.” John describes life at the mining camp, the one-room schoolhouse for first through eighth grade. Kids created their own fun, making cars and guns out of wood; skiing in the wintertime using barrel staves. Since they couldn’t afford to buy meat, they did a lot of hunting. John was ten or twelve when he went with his older brother hunting for deer and sage hen.

When his stepdad died, John quit school at fourteen to work as a black-smith’s helper at a mining company to help support the family. Drafted into the Army during World War II, he returned after three years determined to finish high school, which he did in one year.

Most of his adult life, John worked for mining companies in many capacities, describing in great detail all phases of his work, especially the huge dredges built by the Natomas Company to dig below water level to trap gold. When Battle Mountain

was the barite capital of the world, John was superintendent of Nevada operations until the barite from China hurt the industry. He tells of the ups and downs of mining. He even bought and ran a bar with gambling tables and a few machines for several years, sometimes holding two jobs at once.

Hunting, fishing and cribbage are John's favorite hobbies. An active member of the Lions Club for forty-four years, he's winding up the year as the Deputy District Governor of the State of Nevada.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing John Williams at his home at 63 West Third Street, Battle Mountain, Nevada, May 14, 1993.

John, I'm so pleased to be here to interview you for the Lander County Oral History Project. Would you give us your full name please.

John Williams: John Samuel Williams.

And where were you born?

Salt Lake City.

And the date?

Twelve ten twenty-six [December 10, 1926].

John, how old were you when you came here to Nevada?

Two months old.

Who brought you here?

My mother and my stepfather moved out here from Salt Lake City when I was two months old.

What were your stepdad's and mother's names?

My stepdad was Bill Lauritzen, and my mother's name was Lillie [Cutler Williams Lauritzen].

And what brought them here to Nevada, did they tell you?

He had an opportunity to go into mining. He was previously in mining when he went into Salt Lake, and then he moved back out here and went back into mining again.

Now where did you first come to when your family came to Nevada?

We moved up into Copper Basin, which is probably seven or eight miles south of us, and in a little place called Gold Top. I don't think there's hardly anybody in Battle Mountain that knows that there was a place called Gold Top.

That name doesn't exist any more?

No.

I do see the name Copper Canyon, I drove past that. What kind of mining did he do?

He went into gold mining and copper mining.

Did he ever describe to you the way they did the mining then?

Yes, in fact when he was in the gold mining, he was working by himself and it was during the Depression and I used to go

up with him and help him dig out the rock and run it through what they called a sluice box and clean up the gold at the end of the day, and believe it or not, there was a store here in town that we bought groceries with gold.

You said you helped him, so you must have lived a long time there. You were two months when you first came.

Two months, we lived in Gold Top probably five or six years. I'd say six years.

Ah, so you were a little tot when you were first introduced to gold mining!

Oh yes! Right.

And it stuck, huh? [laughs]

I very well remember the Depression then too.

So tell me, you were just a little boy, do you have any visual recollections of what it was like living there, how many were there, or what your house looked like?

In this little place just below the old Buckingham Mine, there were probably twenty-five to thirty people living there. It was just a little mining camp. We all had a great time together up there.

Now you have quite a big family, about six children.

Seven kids.

What was it like inside that house? How big was it, and how did you all manage in a place with seven kids?

Total pandemonium all the time! [laughs] No, it was really nice. The kids were all close. Mom and Dad, of course, had their bedroom, and all of us kids shared two bedrooms. This was just a little shack. I mean, it wasn't hardly big enough to put a family of three in, but seven of us, in those days you had to do with what you had, and we did it.

Describe to me a little bit about what your mother was like.

She had the biggest heart in the world. She was the nicest person you'd ever want to meet, never had a bad word about anybody, and willing to help anybody any time, and she did. She just worked herself into an early grave. She had a bad heart, and in those days, if they'd have had the technology then that they have now in hearts, she'd still be alive today.

What was her personality like?

Very quiet person. She never was outgoing at all, quite reserved. Like I say, she always had a good word for everybody.

Did she have to do all the cooking?

Yes.

Did the kids, as they got bigger, have chores?

Oh yes we did! [chuckles]

Tell me what yours were;

Every Saturday we had to pack water up a hill. And Saturday was wash day.

What was up the hill?

Well we lived up on the hill and the water supply was down below.

Okay, you went down empty bucket and uphill filled.

Right. And my stepfather made yokes you'd put over your shoulder with two handles on it, and we'd pack two 5-gallon buckets of water up that hill all day long.

Do you have any pictures of that?

No I don't.

That would be wonderful.

That would be something, I tell ya'.

Oh my. Of course you were just a little tyke. What were some of the other chores the family had to do?

Wood cutting, helping with the dishes and the house chores. The girls did the house chores, and we did the heavy work like cutting wood and hauling water.

So you got training early in what work was.

Oh yes, I've worked hard [chuckles] all my life.

So you said you were there 'til you were around six.

Uh-huh.

And then where did the family move?

We moved from there to Copper Canyon. We lived in Copper Canyon until I was, I'm gonna say about fifteen years old.

How far was Copper Canyon from Gold Top?

It was about eight miles.

I'm assuming it's because work stopped at one mine and you went to the other? Or what was the reason?

Well, my stepfather had the opportunity to become a mine foreman over at Copper Canyon, so we moved over there. And housing, again, was real poor. In fact, we had a tent, a large tent, and he built up wooden walls and a wooden floor in the tent. And the rest of it was just a tent, and we lived in that until one fall the wind blew so hard it blew it down, and we finally found a house that we could move into.

Oh my! How did you cope in the real cold weather?

It was tough. We had a fire going all night long in that tent, all night.

Was it because there was not housing there for you?

Housing was very limited then, very limited. In fact, the only reason that we did get a house after our tent blew down is the family that was living in the house had moved to California, so we moved right in.

So even though he had a top position, that didn't matter.

[chuckles] That didn't make any difference, no.

Now what were some of his responsibilities there? You were old enough, did you know?

He was directly in charge of all mining operations. It was underground mining, of course. In those days there was no such thing as open pit. And he had charge of all the underground mining, the blacksmith shop, the machine shop, everything. He had total control over everything.

He must have been a very capable man.

He was, very capable.

Tell me a little bit about him as a person.

Well, you've got to realize and know mining in the old days is not like it is now. In the old days, miners drank heavy. They worked hard, and they drank hard. He had what they called "rock in the box" or silicosis, from drilling underground with the drilling machine and no water to keep the dust down, and breathing that silicon dust all the time. And that's finally what got him, it just ate his lungs up. And he died at the age of forty-two.

Oh, how sad!

Very few mining men lived beyond the years of fifty.

Let me ask you this: was it known that it was harmful? or was that before they understood what was happening?

I suppose that they knew it was harmful, but there was no protection for it. There was nothing on the market like respirators or anything like they have now. It was just get in there and do it and get out. It was tough, it was real tough. They lived a hard life. That's why I say they worked hard and they drank hard.

Does that mean your dad drank hard?

Oh, he drank...[laughs] He drank his share, I'll put it that way. [laughs]

Did that affect the family life or your mother?

No, it never did. I say he drank hard—most miners in those days drank every night after they got off shift, but my stepdad did not. On the weekend he would drink, all he would drink was beer. But they drank their share of it, they drank plenty of beer, and they'd come to town. Of course the only thing in those days was tap beer, and they drank an awful lot of tap beer, and they'd bring jugs to town, and they'd drink beer in the bar, they got ready to go home, then they'd fill these jugs up and head for home. Well they might get halfway home and run out of beer again, and come back [laughs] and fill 'em up again!

Did this disturb your mother?

I suppose it did, although she kept it to herself. She was never very outgoing in the respect that she didn't want the kids to know how she felt about it. I can remember seeing her in pain several times because of the drinking. It had to have an effect on her.

How long did you live at the Copper Canyon mine?

Lived in Copper Canyon until I was fourteen or fifteen years old.

So you were old enough, what I want to know is first, give me a description of the camp, and the houses, the stores. Do you have pictures, I hope?

Yes.

Good, so that we can kind of just get a feel. Was it up against the mountain?

It was in a canyon. It's eighteen miles south of Battle Mountain. In those days it was all gravel road—of course now it's paved. But it was gravel road up there, and there were about eight to ten houses in the canyon. A mile above where we lived, they had a boarding house and bunk house for men, the single miners. And fantastic food in this boarding house. All the single miners lived up there and they boarded with that, and of course the company took it out of their pay, which was normal fee in those days. My dad—when I say “normal fee”—my dad was the mine foreman, making four dollars a day. So you can see. But, you know, you come to town and buy groceries, for twenty dollars, you had to have a pickup to haul your groceries home!

Oh my gosh! So it's all relative.

Oh yeah, twenty dollars now, you can put it in a little tiny sack.

[laughs] That's right! Who ran the boarding house?

A fellow by the name of Frank Weiss, he and his wife ran it. And they had two daughters that helped.

Were they locals?

As far as I can remember, Frank and his wife moved here out of a mining camp in California, when they found out that the boarding house was for lease here. And they come up and took it over then.

The families that were living in the camp in these other houses, you were in one of those houses?

Yes.

Were most of those from Nevada, or did some come from other places of the country?

No, they were all local people.

And tell me about the school that was there.

It was a little one-room schoolhouse and the teacher had from first grade through eighth grade. The high school kids were bused to Battle Mountain. I say “high school kids were bused,” there were only about three kids that were high school age! I don't suppose that there were over, at any one time, there was over ten kids in the whole school.

Did some of the kids stop school after eighth grade?

None of 'em.

They all went on to high school?

You bet! And many of them, after they got out of high school, went on to college.

Good, so they were encouraged.

You got an education then. It's not like it is now. You had individual attention in a country school. The teacher could afford to take time. If she had a problem student, she could take time to take care of him. Nowadays the classes are so big that they just...And country schools, if I had my kids and had my druthers, I would rather be in a mining camp with a country school than I would in a town. You get so much more out of it, I know that for sure.

Did you enjoy school?

I loved it, you bet.

What were your favorite subjects?

Spelling and geography.

Amazing! Were there any that you hated?

Arithmetic! [laughs] I didn't particularly care for English, but I learned to like it when I got in high school because I had a wonderful high school English teacher—she was really good.

Was there a store at this mining camp?

No.

Did you have to come into town?

Had to come into town.

And how often would you come in?

They would usually try and come in about twice to three times a month.

And would that be Mom and Dad, or take the kids?

Probably Mom and Dad and maybe one or two of the kids. The rest of us stayed home.

What did you do for fun at the camp?

Well, we made our own fun. We made cars out of wood and guns out of wood. We just played like that. And then, of course in the wintertime we did an awful lot of skiing. In those days, we used to get snow up there four and five feet on the level.

What did you use for skis?

Homemade skis out of barrel staves.

That sounds like fun.

Finally my parents bought me a pair of skis that just had the toe strap on 'em, and we would walk way up on the mountain, take all day long to walk up there, just to ski down! [chuckles]

Oh my gosh! Did you go fishing or hunting?

We did a lot of hunting because meat was pretty expensive then, and the family couldn't afford it. So my older brother and I used to go out and hunt deer and sage hen.

And who would slaughter and prepare all that?

We did.

How old were you when you were doing that?

I was probably ten, twelve years old.

Oh my gosh—different life.

My older brother, of course, was about six years older than I was.

So you learned a lot from him?

Oh yes.

He kind of took you along?

Yeah.

Sometimes big brothers don't want to do that.

I can remember we had an old 1928 Buick sedan, and he finally got so he could drive, and stepdad trusted him enough that we would take that and go hunting. [chuckles]

Oh my, that must have been great.

It was. It was fun.

Now did your dad die while you were at Copper Canyon?

Yes. He died in 1942.

Was he real, real sick before he died?

Yes, for about two years he was unable to work at all.

Did they take care of him financially, the mine?

No, in those days there were no...

No union?

No union, no insurance, no anything.

Nothing?

No.

Terrible.

No benefits at all.

Terrible. What did your mother do?

Well, when my stepdad died, my oldest brother was in the Navy.

Was this during the war?

Yes, the Second World War. He was in the Navy, my oldest sister was at nurses' training school in San Francisco, my next oldest sister was at that time...I want to back up a little bit here. Anaconda Mining Company from out of Utah, had a five-year lease on Copper Canyon during the war years. So she was working as a bookkeeper for Anaconda

out there in the office. My stepdad died, and like I say, my older brother and sister were away and couldn't come home and make a living for the family, so I quit school when I was fourteen years old and went to work at Anaconda as a blacksmith's helper. And I worked for two years, along with my sister working, and finally saved up enough money to get the family going pretty good again. Then I quit work and went back to school. In the meantime, we had moved into Battle Mountain.

Renting a house?

Yes, right across the alley from us here.

Oh my goodness!

I just got back in school, in my sophomore year, and got drafted.

Oh no!

I was eighteen years old and they drafted me. I was in the Army for three years. When I got out of the Army I thought, "By gosh, I'm gonna finish school one way or another!"

Good for you! [chuckles]

Twenty-one years old, being halfway around the world three or four times, and go back with a bunch of high school kids was a chore, let me tell ya'. It was an experience! But I *did* finish school.

But that shows a lot for your character. Now tell me about your mom in the meantime. You said she was ill.

She was very ill, and my sister that was in nurses' training became a registered nurse and

she was working in a hospital in Greenville, California. Let's see, I'm trying to think back. Betty got married and of course there was Auriel and Beverly and Bill and I. Okay, the two girls went to California with their sister, Luella, who is the nurse, and Mother was so sick that we couldn't take care of her, so Luella asked to bring her down there to Greenville. So we took her down to Greenville and she put her in the hospital there where she could keep an eye on her all the time. She was there in that hospital for about two years and got well enough that she could come home. And my brother and I bached in that house over there, for two years: did our own laundry, our own ironing, cooked our own meals, plus go to school, and I had a part-time job in order to make enough money to go to school. So then Mother moved back, and my sister moved back and she was the matron of the hospital here.

Now what year was that when your mother moved back and you were finishing school?

That would have been about 1946. Then, like I say, she moved back here and of course she bought the house and moved in over there.

Where's "over there"?

Well, it's the south end of town here. She moved in over there and Bill and I moved in with her. We took real good care of her all the time, and then she finally married my stepfather's brother, Clarence Lauritzen.

Really?! And where was he living?

He was living here in Battle Mountain.

Had he been married before?

Never. And they were married for about two years and she died.

[expressing concern] Oh, what did she die from?

Heart trouble. She had leakage of the heart real bad, some bad valves.

Did she have a happy couple of years with her new husband?

Very happy, yes.

So that was at least some consolation.

You know, as happy as could be under the circumstances, because she was partially bedridden. I say bedridden—she couldn't do anything, because the minute she did, her heart just would race, you know.

So that's amazing that Clarence married her. He must have loved her.

He did, you bet.

Took good care of her?

Took real good care of her, you bet.

So that was good she had that. And you boys nearby.

Uh-huh.

Now what was your part-time job while you were going to school?

In the service station—service station attendant.

In the evenings?

Yes, and then on the weekends I worked Saturday and Sunday all day.

Oh my! Amazing. So then how did school go?

Very good! I was drafted in my sophomore year, and when I got out of the Army I come back and finished school in one year. I compiled it all, all my necessary credits in one year, and graduated.

And so then after that, what did you do after you got your high school diploma?

I went to work in the summertime for a private small contractor here in Battle Mountain by the name of Blaine Hoalst. He had a couple of caterpillar tractors and compressors and drills. We went up and did mostly assessment work for people who had claims.

Describe what that means, "assessment work."

Assessment work is work that has to be done on claims in order to keep them valid.

I want you to describe it in more detail, what it means to make a claim and to keep it valid.

Okay, you stake a claim: that claim consists of six hundred feet wide by fifteen hundred feet long. And you can stake as many claims as you want, and if they're contiguous, that is, side by side or end to end and touching all the way, you can do all the assessment work on one claim. Assessment work is required one hundred dollars per claim. If you've got fifteen claims, that's fifteen hundred dollars' worth of work that has to be done. It can all be done on one claim, like I say, if they're contiguous, but if there are areas between them, voids between them, then you have to do so much on the

ones that are in contiguous, and then keep on doing that until you satisfy the assessment.

A couple of questions for people who don't live in mining areas: Explain to them, first of all, what land is this? How do they determine what they can claim? And how do they claim it?

Okay, the land is government land, owned and control by the Bureau of Land Management. You are entitled to go out as long as it is on open land, BLM ground, you can go out and stake a claim and you are supposed to prove that there are minerals on that ground in order to stake a claim.

In other words it's where there are minerals so that they can get people to get the minerals out of the ground?

That's right.

Okay, now do they show you some kind of a map? How do you know the area that you can choose from?

You can choose any area you want, as long as it is BLM ground. If it's private ground or deeded ground you can't stake it.

And how do they determine that there's ore in that ground?

Mainly by geological structure of the rock in the area. You get what they call "float." In the case of barium, barium comes from an outcropping of rock, and through the years a lot of the rock has eroded and washed down the hill with the rain and melting snows and one thing and another. The way to find that is go up a creek bed, and you find heavy material in a creek bed, that's usually an indication that there's barite and it came from somewhere up

above. So that's the way you go looking for it. Same way with copper.

You can claim hills?

Oh, definitely, yes.

Is it for Nevadans?

No, it's United States wide.

So if someone who wants to develop a mining company—it can be anybody?

It can be anybody, yes.

And do some of them hire people that know where there might be this?

Yeah, nowadays there are what they call consultants that go out and look for these. The companies hire them to go out and look for them: Geologists, geological consultants, and that's what they have those for and they go out and find these areas. Then once you find a place that looks attractive enough to stake a claim, then you go ahead and stake a claim, like I say, six hundred feet wide by fifteen hundred feet long.

How do you stake it? How do you claim it?

You put a location notice, and then you have ninety days to put up your corner posts.

What does a location notice look like?

It describes the area that the claim is in, how it runs—north and south or east and west or whatever—and defines that it is six hundred feet wide by fifteen hundred feet long.

Are there forms that you fill out?

Yes.

That you get from the BLM?

You get those from the assessor's office over here.

Okay. And then you put stakes?

You put this location monument up. It has to be a four-by-four post and has to be at least four feet above the ground.

Okay, where people can see.

Then in the old days, we used to put them in tobacco cans. You put this location notice in there, so that tells the people that you have claim to that ground, see. Then you have ninety days to go ahead and put up your corner posts, your two end posts and side posts. You're supposed to have two end posts on each side, and then a side post in between the fifteen hundred feet. You don't have to have between the six hundred feet, just the two end posts there. Then when you get that up in ninety days, then you have an allotted time, and I don't remember just how much it is, to do your location work. And that has to be three hundred dollars per claim, to keep this claim valid.

Now what kind of work? How do people who don't have a big company and equipment, how do they do this?

Well, what they did in the old days, they would dig a shaft or a tunnel, something like that. It was to their advantage to go ahead and sink a shaft or run a drift in the hillside to find out if the material was there, see? That constituted your locational work.

Explain to me what you mean by "they own it." What do they own?

When I say that you own the land, you don't own the land, you own the mineral rights on that piece of ground—that's it.

So you can't farm or build a house or do anything else on that?

Well, if you're mining on the ground, you can build a house on it, yes. You can build a mill on it, you can build anything you want on it. But it all is predicated on the fact that there is a property there that is producing metal, or minerals.

What happens if someone has a claim for fifty years and really doesn't do much with it?

As long as he does his assessment work every year and files it with the county recorder, the land is still his.

Okay, even if there's nothing there.

That's right.

Is that land also used for grazing?

Yes, these ranchers, their cattle get on it and graze on it, you bet.

It's not open grazing land, then?

Yes.

Okay, open grazing land.

Yes, open grazing.

So that helps me understand that. Now, you started, and I got you way off, because a lot of

people don't understand that, as I didn't, until I came up here.

Well, I should have explained that to you too.

That's the good thing about having someone who doesn't know. Now, get back then, you started to do some work with assayers. So let's get back to that job.

When you find a feasible property, the thing that you do is take samples of the rock and send them in to an assayer, to evaluate that rock. And if it is in fact minable ore, then you go ahead and do your mining. But unless you are a chemist, you can't pick up a rock and say, "Hey, this is..." Barite, you can. And some coppers you can too, I guess, and gold—but most of the time it's better to get an assay on it so you know where you stand.

And where do these assayers work? They have offices?

Well, in the old days, most of them were in Salt Lake City. There were two in Salt Lake, and of course Phoenix and Seattle, Washington, were a couple others to mention. But nowadays, all these mining companies have their own assay office. They do all their assaying right there, so that when they drill a hole, they assay that hole.

And they hire knowledgeable people.

Oh yes. Yes, they have chemists working for them all the time.

Chemists? Geologists?

Uh-huh.

So that's a good job to have.

Oh, it is! It pays well too.

So tell me what you did when you helped.

Well, I did a little bit of everything. [chuckles] I started out running a jackhammer, drilling holes in the hillside, building a road. And went from there to blacksmith's helper in Copper Canyon, and then from there as an oiler in the powerhouse at Copper Canyon. We had three big diesel engines up there and I was classified as an oiler.

Tell me what you did as an oiler.

Every hour you had to go around, and there were oil cups on these rocker arms on these big diesels, and you had to oil these up and keep it all wiped down and clean and everything. It was a nice job. The inside job, and it was nice, except in the summertime you wanted to be outside. And then I went from there into barite mining. I worked for a California-based company by the name of Westvaco Chemical Corporation, which their mine was twenty-six miles south of Battle Mountain on the Austin Highway. And I was a jackhammer operator and truck driver and worked at that for four years and then had an opportunity to go to work for Natomas Gold Dredging Company. The office manager took a liking to me and asked me if I wanted to go to work in the office. And I told him at the time, "I haven't had any office experience. I don't know the first thing about it." He said, "I'll teach you."

Now, let's back up a little. Where was this office?

The gold dredge? It was just below, a mile below Copper Canyon, right back out in the same place again.

Right back where you were as a kid, uh-huh! Did this seem appealing?

Not to me, but my wife said, "You ought to think about this." So I thought, "Well, what future have I got driving a truck in a mine, or running a jackhammer?, I'll try it." So I tried it. And I worked there as timekeeper and warehouseman for Natomas Company for five years until they shut down. And then, ironic as it seems, Copper Canyon Mining Company started back up again, and they didn't have anybody to run the office, so they hired me as the office manager up there. So that helped.

I want to move back a little bit. It slipped out, you said something about your wife. Now we haven't gotten you married! [laughs] So what we're going to do is back up a little bit. First, when and where did you first meet Frances?

Frances and I were high school sweethearts.

Was that back in the Copper...

No, right here in Battle Mountain.

Where was she living?

She was living on a ranch ten miles southeast of Battle Mountain named the Martin Ranch. And I was living in town, and it was after I got out of the Army that I started going with her.

Did you know her before the Army?

I probably did, but I didn't pay too much attention to her, you know. So after we finished school, we got married.

You were going together through high school?

Uh-huh, through high school.

Okay.

In 1948, July 18, 1948, we got married.

How old were you and how old was Frances?

I was twenty-one and she was eighteen.

Oh, little kids! [laughs]

Yeah. Well, nineteen—she was nineteen.

And where did you live?

The first place we lived was in a house here in town, and we lived there for three years, and then moved to Natomas Company, moved out there.

Why did you move to Natomas?

That's when I was offered the job in the office at Natomas. We moved out there and our first son was born three years after we moved in 1951. I worked there until 1955, as a warehouseman and timekeeper. And then every week they would shut the dredge down, and I had charge of the cleanup. By that I mean collecting the gold that they dug during that seven-day period.

Now, I want you to explain that in detail.

Okay. The gold is in what they call alluvium gravel that, in this instance, eroded and washed from Copper Canyon, way up above, a mile or two above, down into this what they call the Big Fan below the mouth of Copper Canyon. And the company built a dredge in 1947 and this dredge had 121 nine-and-a-half cubic foot buckets in line

that just ate into the—they were on sort of a conveyor-type deal, and the dredge was a weird, awesome-looking sight to see out in the middle of a desert—a great big iron monster out there. And it had a big pond, it created its own pond as it dug.

Really?!

Yes, and they pumped water into this pond all the time from seven miles out in the valley. Okay, these buckets on this line would dig into the bank and it would pivot from side to side so that you got the full swing of the bank all the way. Then they would drop the digging ladder down a little bit, and then they'd go back and forth again, see, until they dug eighty feet below water level. And it would dig as high as twenty feet above water level. So you're looking at a hundred feet in height that it would dig, plus swing probably three hundred and eighty feet. It consumed a terrific amount of muck in a seven-day period. There was an awful lot of muck went through that dredge. The dirt went into what they called a trommel with high-pressure monitor water nozzles. The trommel turned counter-clockwise, and there was a twelve-inch water line inside the trommel with these nozzles protruding from the water line, and blasting this muck. And because some of this muck was pretty hard to break up, and the trommel turning had what they called lifting bars, and it kept the muck tumbling all the time. And this water washing against it, breaking this muck up, and the trommel had screens on it, and if I remember right, the first set of screens were one-quarter-inch holes, the second set of screens were three-eighths-inch holes, the fourth set of screens were half-inch holes, and the fifth set of screens were three-quarter-inch. A half a screen was three-quarter-inch, and the other half of the screen

was one-inch holes. So that you caught pretty good-sized nuggets. In fact, I doubt that there was anything ever larger than one inch ever went over that. And then this muck would go down into what they called distributor boxes, after it left the trommel screen, it washed out of the holes in the screen. And the distributor boxes washed into sluices on both sides of the port and starboard side of the dredge. Now these distributor boxes and the sluices didn't have any quicksilver in 'em. And I'll explain what they use quicksilver for too. They use this quicksilver for trapping gold. Once gold hits quicksilver, it stops it dead, right there, and it won't move any further. At the end of these long sluices out of the distributor boxes, there was a box on the end of 'em that had quicksilver in it. This dirt going down over these riffles and down in there, the quicksilver down there caught all the gold that might have washed on over. The rest of the gold was caught in the riffles up above. Now, real *fine* dirt, real fine stuff, gold, would go into what they called the jigs on the port and starboard side. And these jigs are nothing but a big washing machine that pulsate up and down, and that pulls your muck down and into these boxes in the jigs, the port and starboard side. These had what they called rubber auger hole riffles that were twenty-four inches wide by eighteen inches long. Then they had one-inch auger holes in 'em and we would fill these auger holes. They were three-quarter of an inch deep. We would fill these rubber auger holes with quicksilver. And they had about four sets of those down through there with quicksilver in 'em. This fine muck washing over these, and if there was any gold in it, was caught in that quicksilver and then dirt would wash on over it. Another safety factor at the end of these jig sluices was another trap down there, just the width of the sluice, but was

about a foot deep. And that had quicksilver in it. The muck going down over there would create a washing action in this box and the gold would catch in the quicksilver there, and the dirt would go on over and out the... They had two stacker belts out the back of it—looked like a big spider—and these belts were a hundred and fifty feet long. So this dirt being dug up here, washed through the machine, and the waste going out the back end would create your end of your pond out there. So you're digging forward all the time, plus moving your tailings pile is going like this, your pond is going right with you all the time.

Is that what creates those tailings that you see in pools all around?

That's right.

You do a wonderful job of explaining.

Now, I'll tell you something. You're probably familiar, you're from California: Have you ever been between Folsom and Sacramento?

Uh-huh.

Okay, on that road between Folsom and Sacramento, Natomas Company had seven dredges working down there. All that country is now all built up in housing. But I can remember ten years ago when it was nothing but tailings down there, and there's still some visible down there, I'm sure. But they had seven dredges working there, they had this one working up here that I worked on. Then they had two in South America.

Now you said you had to, one day a week, clean up the gold in the buckets?

One day a week they would shut the dredge down for repair. And during this repair time they would change bucket lips on the dredge, because the ground was very abrasive, and the bucket lips had to be changed. They were lucky if they made seven days. To show you how abrasive it was, as opposed to California dredges, they would work fourteen to sixteen months without changing bucket lips down there. We would change them up here every seven *days*.

Did you have a special working crew who did that kind of work?

Right. Well, the people working on the dredge, the winchmen and the oilers and all of them—sternmen and all of them—had to do it. And then while they were doing all this repair work on the dredge, then I went in with four people and we cleaned all the sluices off—just in the jigs now. That's the only thing we did every seven days, in the jigs. Okay. We would take about a three-gallon steel bucket in with us, and a pan that was probably three feet long by two feet wide by four inches deep. We would dump these auger hole riffles in this pan, dump all the quicksilver and gold in there, see. Then we would have a piece of Number 10 duck canvas—pretty heavy canvas—that we'd put over this bucket and push it down in there and form a little cavity. And then we would pour all this quicksilver into this thing, and we'd pick it up and squeeze it like you would squeeze like if you'd make jelly, you'd squeeze the pulp and get the juice. Okay, all the quicksilver would come out through this canvas and leave you with a sponge of gold in there. It'd be three times the size of a softball.

That probably was kind of fun.

It was. It was backbreaking work, because you're in confined quarters. Every seven days we would do this, then I would take all this—this is called amalgam now, because it's caught with quicksilver. I would take this at the end of the day down to the retort house, which was right next to the office. The next day I would spend all day—and I'll explain this in detail to you too—we'd take the amalgam, put it in a steel crucible, and then you take fire clay and put it around the top of the crucible. Then a lid goes on that crucible. In the top of this lid is a one-inch hole for a pipe that is screwed into it. It comes out and it comes up about eight inches. Then it bends about eighty degrees and it's got a four-foot-long water jacket on it. And then of course just a pipe at the end of it. The pipe goes all the way through this water jacket. What I'm trying to say is, it's not hollow. The pipe doesn't come in and then it's hollow and a pipe coming out. The pipe goes all the way through. Then I put a wedge and clamp over this crucible and drive a steel wedge in there to tighten this down and squeeze this fire clay out—then I know it's sealed real good, because if you ever get salivated with quicksilver, you lose all your teeth, your hair and everything. So then I put it in a burner and I have a little weed burner, a butane burner that shoots a flame into this fire pot. I leave that in there until...What that does is heat this amalgam up, gets it real hot. Okay, the quicksilver then comes off in a vapor, up through this pipe, hits this water-cooled jacket—this is the four-foot-long jacket, has a hose going in one end and a drain coming out the other end, so that your water is cold all the time in there. Then this pipe going through this jacket, the vapor going down there condenses back into quicksilver and drops out in a pan at the bottom of it. So you save all your quicksilver.

To use again?

Yes. So when it quits dropping quicksilver, you turn the burner off, take the lid off the fire pot, lift this out with a hoist, and swing it over on the floor, and I had a respirator on—you have to have because you knock that lid off to let it cool, there are terrific fumes come out of there. You knock that off and kick it over and then get out of the building as fast as you can, and all the windows are open so that the wind will blow the fumes out. Then you wind up with a big gold sponge. Then you take a hammer and chisel and break this gold sponge up in as small chunks as you can, because what you're trying to do is get five hundred ounces in each mold. I would wind up with probably—the most that I wound up with on a seven-day work period was 2,500 ounces of gold in a week. And at that time it was thirty-five dollars an ounce. Think what it would be worth now! Then I would take this and pour borax glass, powdered borax glass in with this gold and weigh out five hundred ounces in each one of them, and pour a lot of borax glass in there. And what *this* does, when you put it back in the fire again to melt the gold into a brick, this borax glass is in the bottom and it melts too and it comes up through the gold and takes the impurities out of it, so that you wind up with...Most of the time, gold that we shipped from out there would be right around .980 fine. And by that I mean a thousand is pure gold. And we wound up with—it got as high as .994.

How did you learn this very technical process with so many steps—how did you learn all of this?

We were very fortunate in the fact that we had a general manager that had been in

dredging all his life, and he taught me how to do it.

How long did it take for you to learn to do it so you could be on your own to do that?

About two weeks! [laughs]

You're kidding me!

That's right. It's not that hard.

Were you afraid of the dangers?

No. As long as you pay attention to what you're doing, and don't try and take any shortcuts, you don't have any problems.

How long did you do this kind of work?

For five years. And in the five years... Now, let me back up a little bit too, every year, annually, we would shut down for what they called the general clean-up and general overhaul. Portions of the operation that didn't get attention during a seven-day working period that you shut down and repaired, they had a general repair day, or it would usually take about a week. They would be down for a week, and just go through the whole thing, get it back in top shape. And during that time, there were a *multitude* of other places that we had to clean up, that gold had been collecting for a year. And a lot of it had not been even touched by quicksilver. And a lot of nuggets—we found an awful lot of nuggets. And of course then, I remember the biggest core I ever made was fourteen 500-ounce bricks, in a general cleanup, and that was pretty nice. It's ironic that [chuckles] nowadays they take such precautions with gold, and these gold companies around here, boy, I'll tell you, their

security is *tight*. You can't even get *near* where they pour gold. In those days, after I got the gold all melted into bricks and cleaned up and ready to ship, I would load it in the pickup and haul it to town myself, take it in the railroad depot over here and ship it express.

You're kidding!

That's right. In canvas bags, just haul it in there and give it to 'em.

What did the companies do?

The companies any more have Wells Fargo, Loomis Armored Cars. Have you seen these up and down the highway?

I don't think I've paid attention! What do they look like?

You pay attention now, when you're going home. Just an armored car, and it has the brand name on the armored car. Once a week they make a round of all these mines, and they pick up their gold, for a fee.

Is that right?! Oh, and they have guards probably?

They have armed guards with them all the time, you bet. And that's the way they dispose of their gold now. There are points where you can ship gold, but it all winds up in the government repository there in Tennessee.

Now where do these armored cars take the gold?

I don't know, but I kind of think that they go into San Francisco. I would say they probably go to the smelter in San Francisco for melting down into larger bars. See, most of them are what they call a doré. They don't

pour bars here. They call it D-O-R-E, a doré. It's poured into...See, you have a pot like this. When they get through melting that gold down, then it's in a semi-round thing, and that's what they ship.

And where is the gold sold? Who are the buyers?

There are independent buyers. Now the company that I worked for, St. George Metals, sends theirs all the way back to Maryland. They send it by mail to Maryland, and there is a company back there that buys it from us. And of course before we ever get *paid* for it, they drill this door in several spots around there, and then they sample this to see the fineness of the gold, and that's what you're paid on, is the fineness. The fineness determines how much gold is in there. Any other elements, unless it's silver—you get paid for the silver too.

Is this gold purchased by other countries as well?

I suppose that other countries buy a lot of our gold, you bet. And of course, by the same token, I think we buy some from Russia too. I'm sure we do.

Is there a lot of gold now in this last, what is it, about ten years, this new system with the chemicals—is there a lot of gold being processed?

Nevada now is the second-largest producer of gold in the United States.

What's the first?

In the Black Hills, South Dakota. Africa, of course, is the largest gold-producer in the world. I think we're about the third. It's Africa,

Russia, and then the United States. But this area right here in Northern Nevada is the prime producer. It's what makes Nevada the second-largest gold producer in the United States today. There's some *terrific* big gold mines here in Elko County—awful big ones.

So you're back there with your family. Were all of your children—you have three sons?

Yes.

And were they all born there at the gold mining camp?

The oldest one was, the second one was, but the third one wasn't. No, the youngest one was born when we moved back into town here.

So you were working as office manager, and then the work you were doing with the gold. How long did you stay in that position?

With Natomas Company?

Yes.

I was with them for five years. What prompted the departure there was the fact that one of the stackers that discarded the tailings off the dredge, broke off the dredge and fell in the pond one night. At that time, it would have been too expensive to repair it, because the ground that we had left to dig wasn't that good, and so they decided to terminate the operation.

Oh dear.

So like I say, I was fortunate that Copper Canyon Mining Company started back up

again, and they hired me as the office manager up there.

And did your whole family move there?

Yes.

And what kind of housing did you have there?

We had good housing up there then. By that time Anaconda had moved out and they left all the housing there. And they had built about fourteen or fifteen new houses up there. And so we were fortunate to get a real nice home.

What year was that?

In 1955.

And your kids—what grade level were they in by now in school?

There wasn't any of them *in* school. See the oldest one now, at that time, was only four years old when we moved up there.

Okay, so they were little kids.

Yes, and I worked up there for a year-and-a-half. I hate to say it, but the people that had Copper Canyon Mining Company were speculators. And it didn't pan out and they shut down.

Oh dear.

So then I moved the family back into town.

And then what did you do?

I went to work first for the Bureau of Land Management, helping to build an equipment

shed on their property on the north end of town here. And I worked there for about a year-and-a-half, and then went to work for Magnet Cove Barium Corporation, which is now Dresser Industries. And they have this barite producing plant down here right across the street from the Colt, that big plant on the right-hand side going out of town, west.

Right across from what?

The Colt Motel.

What kind of work were you doing for them?

I was the office manager there.

So it was good you got into the office training, wasn't it?!

Yes, it helped out.

Now then, back to your family: where was the house that you lived in when you came back to Battle Mountain?

I'm trying to think where we moved into first. It was about three blocks south of us here.

Did you rent it?

Yes. And we lived there for a couple of years, and then we bought a house on the north side of town. And we lived there until 1962, right after the flood. And then I bought this place.

You came back to Battle Mountain, and by then your kids were starting school, some of them?

Yes, the oldest one was then in kindergarten.

And was that the grammar school that's now the courthouse?

Well, that was the grammar school. Kindergarten—I'll take that back, they didn't have any kindergarten then. He was in the first grade, that's right. He went to school in the first grade over here, yes.

Tell me a little bit about the family life. Did you have time to do things with the kids?

Oh yes.

What were some of the things for fun for the family?

We did a lot of fishing and hunting together. Had some real good friends in Folsom, California, and we'd go down there and visit them once in a while. That's why I know so much about that Folsom area too.

Yes. Now, before we continue with your work, as these years were going on with the mining coming and going, I want to get a little feel for the town of Battle Mountain, so what I'd like you to do is think back to when you first came, when you went to school, and came into Battle Mountain, and just follow it through a little bit for me, what changes occurred over the years from your high school days.

When we moved back into town here from the mining company that I had worked for, the town at that time, maximum population was probably seven hundred people. And strange as it may seem, you can go four blocks south of us here, and that was the end of town—from there on was nothing but sagebrush, all the way. It was a real small town, everybody knew everybody, you didn't have to lock your doors, you didn't have to lock your car, had nothing

to worry about. People knew everybody—in fact, everybody knew everybody else's business. That can be detrimental too! [laughter] But it was small-town living, typical small-town living is real nice, it's real enjoyable. Everybody enjoys everybody, you had picnics together all the time, and just a lot of fun, you know. As time progressed, of course, the first big company to move into Battle Mountain in the starting of the gold mining era was the Duval Corporation, which is now Battle Mountain Gold. And of course they brought in probably—they started with six hundred and some people in construction, and wound up with a work force of around four hundred and eighty-five people. That was a blessing to Battle Mountain. Financially, it helped bring the town back on its feet, because you know, when you don't have any industry other than ranching and very little mining, you don't have a very good tax base. So this did help quite a little bit. Then of course there are other companies that moved in: Echo Bay and a few others that moved in here that have really helped the town out. By the same token, when you get expansion of this nature, you bring in a lot of undesirables too. That goes with the territory, I suppose. The growing pains have been felt in every phase of government in the town: the sheriff's office, county commissioners, and everything else. Of course that's all part of expansion, I suppose. But I prefer to go back to the time when the town was seven hundred people. [chuckles] I've seen this town boom and bust so many times that it just...I just like the old style of living and that was it.

Could people make a living when there wasn't too much?

Everybody seemed to have more money then than they do now. You were paid a lot less,

things were a lot cheaper, of course, according to your pay scale. But everybody seemed to have a lot more money. For instance, when I was working for Westvaco Chemical and was offered my first job in an office, I was making \$1.25 an hour for Westvaco and went to work for \$1.00 an hour in the office! But I had more money all the time. I don't know, I can't explain it, but I did.

Things cost much less.

Right. Of course, you got to realize this, too, that a lot of people don't know: In the old days when you went into a mining camp, your housing was furnished, you didn't pay any housing. The only thing that you bought was your fuel to keep your house warm, and that was it.

But what if there was no mining here?

If there was no mining here, I probably would have went someplace and found some other type of industry to get into. Heaven only knows, I may have been a rancher, I don't know.

Did most of the people living here from that seven hundred before new people came in—did a lot of them go into the mining?

Yes. A lot of the locals went into mining. A lot of them went into ranching—their parents had ranches, and of course as time went on their parents retired or died and they took over the ranches, yeah.

Now let's look at the town a little bit. Look up and down Main Street and tell me some of the changes on that big street. You said that it ended at a certain place and that was it. I understand the trains came through here. So think back a

little when you came to high school, and then the dramatic changes, getting into a big city now.

Well, I can remember when I was just a little tyke coming in from Copper Canyon with my parents. There used to be a railroad run from Battle Mountain to Austin, called the Nevada Central, the old N.C., and it was on a narrow-gauge track, and one of these great big bell smokestacks on the front end. I can remember coming into town from Copper Canyon and seeing that train come down the valley, just a puffin' black smoke, you know. And they had a roundhouse here in Battle Mountain which used to be right up there, just a little bit, maybe a couple hundred yards east of the Napa Auto Parts now. And I can remember that train coming into town, disconnecting from the cars, pull into the roundhouse and they would turn it around and pull it back out and hook up a bunch of cars and send it back to Austin.

Did you ever ride on it?

Never did, no.

I'll bet you wished you did!

There were a couple of people here in town whose parents or father was...Well, Butch Hinman was one. His father was a brakeman on that train, or an engineer, I don't know which, one of the two. And Sam King, another one. He worked on it too. And then I can remember when they first introduced the diesel locomotives, and when the first one came through Battle Mountain. At that time the town was probably only *four* hundred people, and everybody crowded the railroad tracks up here to see this diesel engine go through. Well of course they realized there

was a bunch of people out there watching it, so they slowed down real slow going through so everybody could get an "eee" and "awe" out of it, you know. [chuckles] But I can still remember the old coal burners going through town there too. In fact, when I went in the Army, that's what I went in on, was a coal burner.

Oh is that right?!

Oh yes, going through the Carlin Tunnel, I can remember, with the windows open, I got an ash in my eye! [laughs]

Oh my gosh! Now, looking at the kinds of businesses that are here now, think back, and how many changes have there been in the types of businesses that are here?

Oh, a multitude of 'em. There used to be, right next door to the Nevada Hotel up there, just a small building. I don't think it was maybe eight feet wide and probably twenty feet long. And the Ramsdell brothers, Oliver and Ade Ramsdell had a haberdashery in there. And two old fellas—one of them was crippled pretty bad. And then of course there was the little drugstore with the ice cream fountain in it.

Is that the same one that's in town now?

Right now. That's where it was then.

What happened to the ice cream parlor?

Well, Nevada Hotel used to have a bar in where the lobby is. Okay, right back of the lobby, towards the alley, the bar used to be in the back end there. Where the bar is now, *that* used to be all ice cream parlor. And then the restaurant, of course, is over where it is now

too. That was quite the thing—after school everybody'd go down and have an ice cream sundae or milkshake or something, you know.

Uh-huh, and get to see each other socially.

Yeah. And then there was one, two, three—three service stations in town. And one, two, three bars. And a grocery store. There was only one grocery store at that time. And that was...I can't even think of that guy's name that had it at the time. Horton's! Horton's Mercantile and Grocery Store. And then on the alley behind Horton's Mercantile was the butcher shop. And that was about the extent of the businesses in town then. Of course that was enough to satisfy the needs of the town.

Sure, a small town.

Yeah. And everybody lived happy, and oh boy, it was a fun time in those days. [laughs]

What are the things now that make it not as enjoyable as it was then?

Well, like I mentioned, with expanding, the town growing like it did, as fast as it did, and having growing pains and bringing in a bunch of undesirables, the jails have filled up, you've had to hire more police protection, the fire department has expanded from one fire engine and no ambulance, to *three* fire engines and *three* ambulances. You can't go anywhere without locking your doors. You don't dare even go in the grocery store without locking your car when you go in, even though you're going to be in there just for a few minutes. I've learned to lock my car even when I go in to check my mail.

That's most places I ever go to. But I know Battle Mountain, when I came, I sensed that some people still leave doors open, out of habit.

A lot of them do. A lot of them are sorry for it, because...

Who are the people who are the ones creating the crimes? Do you know? Are they caught? Is there a way to determine who they are?

I can't say that they're poor, and I can't say that they're unemployed, because you look at the police blotter in the paper, they publish it every week, and the people that are being picked up have good jobs working for these gold mines. Of course a lot of it that is creating the problems now is DUI, driving under the influence. An *awful* lot of that, a *lot* of it, and contributing.

One of the things, because I'm not from a gambling town, that I find is fun, but I also find can contribute to it—it's fun to go in and play a nickel machine, but they give free drinks. And then people sitting there are often drinking too much because they're sifting there and it's so easy when you're handed a drink. Does that contribute to the drunk driving?

I don't think that so much, no. I think a lot of it, the people that are getting picked up are habitual drunkards that eventually get caught.

Are they people passing through?

No, they're local people that are working in mines around here, and one thing and another, in different types of industry. But you speak of having a drink offered you when you're gambling—I haven't seen it in *this* town. At the "21" tables, yes, they will probably offer you a drink. But if you're sitting there playing a slot machine or something, you're never offered one like they do in Reno.

Oh yeah, I'm offered.

Is that right?

I went a couple of evenings to play a little nickel poker, and they came and offered drinks.

I'll be darned!

Which is wonderful, if you only take one, but I saw some...

You have to have a certain amount of will power.

That's right.

And if you're prone to drinking, then throw will power out the window, because that doesn't do you a bit of good.

What about the robberies?

Quite a few of those.

Are those teenagers?

No. A lot of breaking and entering, a lot of robberies. There is a certain amount of it that are teenagers. But I say that most of them are adults. Published in the paper, when they publish a name, you know, you have to be above eighteen years old before they'll publish it.

What about drugs? because I know how common it is in big cities.

There's a certain amount of drugs in Battle Mountain, yes. And the law enforcement officers know who they are, and they, every once in a while, have a raid here. About a year ago they had a big raid and they picked up eight people, who are serving time for it. And I suppose the nature of the thing, there'll

always be that. Anything as lucrative as drugs, there's always that element that's going to get into it. Battle Mountain is no different than any other town, and don't fool yourself that there isn't drugs here, because there is.

There seems to be a real good sheriff's department where they patrol.

They do a good job. You were talking about—backing up a little bit—about breaking and entering. The wife and I went to Hawaii about ten years ago, and I haven't fixed it yet, but I didn't have police protection put on the house when we left, because I didn't think I needed any. We came back, somebody had tried to break in that back door, and they pried that door frame—I'll show you—they pried the door frame apart that far, and something, somebody going down the alley or something, scared 'em off. What they did, they looked in that window and they could see my guns in the cabinet, see, and they wanted to get in it.

Oh my!

I was fortunate that I didn't lose 'em all. So every time we leave now and go on a vacation, extended vacation, why, I have police protection put on the house.

Can you put a cover over the guns?

I pull those blinds so they can't see in then.

Good. Now, I got a little sidetracked, because you were working in the barium mines, so get me back into your job barium mining.

My first experience with barium mining was in 1948, I went to work for Westvaco Chemical of course, and I worked for them 'til 1951 when I went to work for Natomas

Company. Compared to now, mining methods at that time seem so primitive. Boy you worked hard! I mean, when you got through with an eight-hour shift, you were *done*. And I was just a young buck then too, and stout. [laughs] I think more brawn than brain, probably. But anyhow, I worked for them for three years, and then this job came up out here at Natomas and I took that. But to get back into the barite mining, I went in partners with my brother and another fella here in town in mining barite ten miles southeast of town.

What time period is that?

This was about 1970-1971. We mined together for five years and most of our barite went to California. We also had a lease on a barite mine in Elko County, and that barite went back to Coffeerville, Kansas to Glidden Paint Company.

Tell me in some detail about that. Did you hire people, how did you mine that? What did you do?

No, we were just on a small scale, and we shipped probably 30,000 tons a year was our max.

How do you mine barite?

You have to scrape the overburden off of it. By that I mean the waste material over the top of...Barite comes in a big mass.

Is this above-the-ground mining?

Open pit mining, yes. So you take a caterpillar in there, and you scrape all the overburden off this, and then you go ahead and drill your holes and blast it. And then muck it up and put it over a belt and handpick

the waste off of the conveyor belt. And then you just throw the waste out on the ground and the ore goes over the end of the belt and stacks up and then you haul it into town. At that time we were hauling it into town and dumping it in the railhead here, and shipping it to California.

How many of you did that?

Three of us.

And tell me some of the things barite is used for.

There's a thousand and one uses for barite: they use it in paint; they use it in gum; they use it in cosmetics; they use it in oil, in lubricants; they use it in grease; and they use it in medicine. If you have ever had a scan for ulcers, that's what you drink, is barite. They can trace it through your system. That's just a few. And drilling for oil, crude oil—that's the big thing that barite is used for. Ninety-nine percent of it is used for that. In Texas, the Gulf area, Oklahoma, all over the Southwest, Midwest, most all of this barite now goes there. And what it does, it's a heavy material. The specific gravity of pure barite is 4.5.

What color is it?

It's white. Now, when you dig it out of the ground, it's a gray color. But when you grind it up powder fine, it's flour white. When I say specific gravity is 4.5 pure barite, that's four-and-a-half times—a cubic foot of barite is four-and-a-half times heavier than a cubic foot of water. And water is 7.6, so barite would be probably about 32 pounds per square foot. Then they take this ground barite, along with other additives, walnut shells and straw and a bunch of other stuff—they're drilling deep for oil. One major thing that barite is—their

purpose for using barite, is it lubricates the bit while they're drilling. It's heavy enough that if you encounter any fractures in the ground where natural gas may be seeping out, this will settle back into these cracks and help seal off this, see. And by the same token, when you're drilling, you're going to get some cuttings. This helps bring the cuttings back up out of the ground much easier too. I don't think that they'll ever find a substitute for barite for drilling.

I read where when China started to send in their barite, that it hurt the barite industry here. Tell me about that.

Battle Mountain used to be the barite capital of the world. There was more barite shipped out of Battle Mountain to major producers worldwide than any other place. When I worked for Milchem out here—freight from Battle Mountain to Houston, Texas, where we shipped most all of ours, started out at fifteen dollars a ton. And it got as high as *thirty* dollars a ton. Well, China had some real high-grade barite, and these boats going over loaded with stuff would unload their cargo over in China or Japan—if they unloaded in Japan, they'd go around to China. Then they would pick up a load of barite to keep them in the water. If they didn't have a load coming back, it'd be like a cork on the ocean. So then they would haul it back just as ballast. A *real* cheap freight rate. They would haul it back to Houston, Texas, unload it on the dock in Houston cheaper than we could produce it in Battle Mountain. And our freight was killing us, so you couldn't get the railroads to come around—they wouldn't reduce their freight rate. Consequently, they were buying this cheap stuff. But the drilling industry only required 4.2 specific gravity barite. Okay? That opened up our low-grade

barite market. They had a bunch of *high*-grade coming over from China, they didn't want to just sell this high grade to 'em, because they weren't getting any more for the high-grade than they were for 4.2. So we got smart! We had a bunch of low-grade barite, we shipped that down there and blended it with their high-grade barite, to come up with a 4.2 specific gravity. So that wound up, when you run out of low-grade, of course. Then the price of oil predicts your barite industry. If the price of oil is high, drilling is going to be good, everybody is going to be exploring for more oil and drilling picks up, you sell a lot of barite. If it's *down*, it has the reverse effect, which happened in the early eighties. To give you an instance, when I worked for Milchem out here, I was the superintendent of Nevada operations. Milchem had three operations out of Battle Mountain, and I was over all of these operations. We had a hundred and twenty-seven employees. When the price of barite went down, we cut back to *seven* employees.

Oh! Now what time period is that?

From about 1981 to about 1983, 1984, in there. That, of course, terminated *my* job. We had a general manager, and they didn't need a general manager and a superintendent of that operation, because now we've only got one operation working, and it's producing *beaucoup* [French for "a lot."] barite that they can't even sell. So that terminated my position. That's when I got out of the barite business.

Now, all of those people who lost their jobs, were they locals, or were they people who came in, that go mine to mine?

No, they were all local people, but fortunately at the time that the barite went bad, gold was just getting a good foothold,

and they all went into gold mining, they all found jobs.

Did you go into gold mining again?

From there, from barite there, I went to work for the people I'm working for right now in gold mining, St. George Metals.

And where is that mine?

That mine is out twelve miles south of town in this big mountain range out here with all the snow on it. We have a gold mine up there.

Is that a fairly new gold mine?

Yes. Well, it's a real old gold mine, rejuvenated.

But a new company?

Right, new company.

Is that with the new system of the chemicals?

Uh-huh.

And when did that start?

We started that in 1988.

Not too long ago. And then did they come in and then you connected with them?

Yes, I went to work for them when they first opened up, as their office manager.

Where is their company headquarters, where are they from?

In Houston.

Is that a big company that owns a lot of mines?

No. No, St. George Metals started out as a Canadian firm, based in Vancouver. Then they had a change in the top brass, the president and so on, and they moved the office from Vancouver to Houston, got a new president, contracted out their accounting business for the company in Houston to a private accounting firm, and I take care of the local accounting here.

I see. Now, is that your job in the office here?

I'm the office manager here.

So you've been working there since 1988?

Uh-huh.

And how is that gold mining progressing?

It's pretty slow because of the nature of the mine—it's all underground up there.

All underground?!

Yes, this is an old mine and what they did is, go back in and clean out the old workings that had been down since 1902 and 1903, went in and cleaned out all the old workings, and of course every one of 'em have water in 'em, and they had to get this water drained out, and they went in and cleaned up the mine and through surface drilling, deep-hole drilling, found areas that had not even been tapped. And that's what, we're doing now, mining into those areas.

How do they mine underground today?

With pneumatic drills, air-operated drills that drill your holes in the face of the tunnel.

They drill 'em about six foot deep, and then shoot, and then they go in and muck up this, and then when they get it all cleaned up, then they go back in and drill some more and just keep on going.

How do they protect their lungs?

Everything is behind 'em, all their air lines and water lines and everything are behind 'em. They take hoses from the end of the lines up to where they're drilling. Then when they get ready to blast, they take all the lines back of the blast area and then go ahead and blast.

So they're not breathing any...

No, no, they have good ventilation in 'em. Now, of course, it's mandatory to use water in underground drilling, so that you're not drilling dry.

I'm thinking of the lung diseases of the early miners.

No, in fact, they don't even have to wear respirators now, it's so good.

What do you see for the future of that mine, and the other gold mining companies here?

Well, it's pretty hard to predict what's going to happen. The thing that's going to predict whether your mine is going to keep running or not is the price of gold. It was down to three hundred and twenty-eight dollars [an ounce] about three or four months ago, and I noticed in the paper today it's up to three hundred and sixty dollars. So as long as gold stays within the three-hundred-dollar realm, between three and four hundred dollars, I don't think you're going to see too much difference in gold mining. You may see

some expansion, but I don't think you're going to see very many cutbacks.

Oh, good.

Unless, of course, the mine runs out, which some of them are doing.

How many active mines are there now in this region?

There's Echo Bay, Battle Mountain Gold, Lone Tree, Marigold, Pinson, Nevada Mass, First Miss, two more over in that area that I can't think of, and then there is Newmont north of us, Dee Gold north of us, Independence, and one other one that I can't think of. So you're looking at probably twelve *big, BIG* outfits.

I didn't know that there were that many.

Oh yes.

What would you say the population of Battle Mountain is now?

The best place to get that information is from the postmaster. They figure so many people per box, and they said the other day that they figured that the population of Battle Mountain right now is running right around 7,400-7,500. So you see, that's ten times bigger than what it was when it was "good" times.

Is that the most it's ever been?

No. Echo Bay and all these mines started their operation and they needed men in construction of it: building the mills and the leach pads and all this.

Temporary, that would be.

Right. And of course they had man camps out here that they lived in. At that time there was about 8,500-8,700 people here. And it's dwindled down now to about 7,400.

When Highway I-80 was built and detoured coming through town—because I understand the traffic would come right through Front Street—how did that affect the community?

Well, anytime you take a major transcontinental route off your main street and move it out of town, away from the business, it's got to affect it. People nowadays travel by road maps, they don't travel by towns. If Elko is a big town on the east, Winnemucca is the next big on the west, people traveling think, "Well, we'll stop in Elko and stay there tonight." If Elko is filled up, which it often does, the next best town is Battle Mountain, and that's what we get, is the leftovers. By the same token, it happens coming from the west. So people coming from San Francisco, they're natural stop the first day would be—you can drive awful easy from San Francisco to Winnemucca. Most of 'em drive to Reno. Then from Reno they would hit Elko the next day, and that's the way they travel, by the size of the town. So I think it has adversely affected Battle Mountain pretty serious, in your tourism business. We don't really have anything to draw tourists off the highway here: food and gas and that's it, you know. And those are two elements that traveling people have to have, of course. We do have some nice motels here, but those motels won't fill up until the other towns around us have filled up.

I stay at Holiday Inn Express, and I notice that's filled up with a lot of working people—not mine working people, but more like people coming to commissioners' meetings and people

who are the engineers, surveyors. They're packed when I come.

Right, you get a lot of salespeople that stay there, that call on these mines—you get an awful lot of those. Geologists, you get a lot of those that stay there. It's a certain amount of mining people that are here temporary until they can find housing.

Like the postmistress.

Right.

So that brings some money into the economy.

Oh sure, you bet.

Now, there was this big controversy when finally the county seat was voted to be moved from Austin to Battle Mountain, and of course I'm interviewing in both places. Tell me a little bit, before the vote—and I know several times they tried to have it moved here, because this is so much bigger—tell me a little bit from your personal experience, what that was like.

Well, I have to feel sorry for the people of Austin because they lost the courthouse, but let's face it, the major tax base in Lander County Battle Mountain. Austin doesn't contribute one-tenth of the tax base to Lander County. So consequently, this is the place it should be, this is the hub of the industry, right here. Another reason I can't feel too sorry for Austin is I have gone to Austin, before they moved the courthouse, to look up documents only to find the courthouse locked up, during a working day! Maybe not locked up, but the County Recorder's not there. He had to go to Fallon or he'd taken the day off and he went fishing or something. And many times people have gone up there, and they wouldn't even

open the darned place up until ten o'clock in the morning! It wasn't a job for them, it was just a passing thing. They didn't take care of it like a business. County business has to be run like a business! You have to be there so many hours a day, because there's people depending on it. They didn't seem to believe that. So that fired a lot of people up and finally got the job done, they got it moved. And I think it's worked out for the best for everybody, because like I say, if you had all these people that have staked *thousands and THOUSANDS* of claims, have to run ninety miles to Austin, and there's nobody there to record your claim, how devastating would that be?!

Oh my. Now, when that was moved here, did that increase some activity in Battle Mountain when new positions opened and more people coming in to do business with them?

Oh, definitely. It definitely did, because there are people from out of town that are interested in areas around Battle Mountain. The only way to find out who owns a piece of ground here or there is to go to the courthouse. And of course you get a lot of people here from Salt Lake. You get people here from San Francisco, you get people here from Wyoming, Colorado, all over, that are in that courthouse *daily*, and that all adds to the economy.

That's increased it.

Yeah. So it was a good move, I think, not only for Austin, but for Battle Mountain.

Oh yes, certainly. What kind of things do you like to do for fun now in your life?

Well, of course my main hobbies are hunting and fishing, but when I'm not doing

that, I have an old friend that I play a lot of cribbage with.

And who is that?

Bob Chiara. We have cribbage battles all the time. [laughs] And I suppose if you played a hundred games, you'd wind up fifty-fifty. That's the way it works.

Do you play this in each other's homes?

Yes. We have cribbage tournaments here too. Usually have ten or twelve people playing, and you draw numbers, odd sits on one side of the table, even numbers sit on the other side of the table, and you play across the table. One side of the table does not move at all, and when you get through with a game, then you move to the next, so that everybody plays everybody, and you wind up with the highest score, the most games won wins the money.

Now where do you play when you're playing in a group like that?

We have been having it over at the senior center over here.

That sounds like fun. That's where your wife is the director?

Uh-huh.

Are these all men?

No, no, there's a lot of women play too—and some kids! Oh yeah.

And when you play with Bob, is it usually at the senior center?

When Bob and I play together, it's either his house or my house.

And how often during the week would you say that you do that?

Oh, for a month, probably two or three times a month we'll get together and play.

What are some of the other things you like to do for fun? Do you and Frances do anything together for fun?

Yeah, I have been a member of the Lions Club here for forty-four years now. Behind you, you'll see a lot of my achievements in Lionism. I'm just winding up the year as the Deputy District Governor of the State of Nevada. I enjoy Lionism, it's a real good organization to belong to. Like I say, I've belonged to them for forty-four years and Frances and I go to a lot of cabinet meetings. The Lions have four cabinet meetings a year, and the last cabinet meeting is the convention. And we just got back from Boulder City, at a three-day convention down there. We have been to two *international* conventions: one in Hawaii and one in New Orleans, and really enjoyed that, really did. Both times we had six couples from Battle Mountain that we went with. And when you get people like that, you can have a lot of fun.

Tell me a little bit about the local Lions Club, what some of their activities are.

The Lions Club was formed by a guy named Melvin Jones, and it originally was designed to help the people with poor eyesight. Eyesight is what Lions is built on. To this date, we still stress eyesight. Of course we have branched out into hearing...and I

can't think of the other one right now. But anyhow, it's immaterial. The main thing is eye care. Locally, we provide examinations and glasses for the needy, people that can't afford it. Lions in California and Nevada have what they call the Lions Eye Bank in San Francisco, California. They have a hospital there, and a staff of doctors and nurses. We can refer anybody that can't afford eye care to this hospital. The only thing that our club is required to do is provide transportation for 'em, make sure that they have transportation down and back. They provide a place for 'em to stay down there, and of course meals and everything. If they don't have insurance, the Lions will do the job free. If they have insurance, they will bill the insurance company and what is left over is provided by the Lions Club. This in part is supported by clubs in Nevada and California by paying a fifty-cent-a-month fee to the organization. I have bought life membership in the Lions Eye Foundation for five hundred dollars, and my wife is a life member too, which I don't supposed I'll ever—I *hope* I never get in a position to have to use it. But it's always there if I do. And we just got through referring one gentleman here in town that had real bad vision in his right eye—he could just barely see, it was just blurry. So we sent him down there, and it wound up costing our club around two thousand dollars for back and forth transportation, so many trips down there. But right now he has 20-40 vision out of that eye, that's how good they are. And they do miraculous work down there. We do a lot of work around town. Every year at Thanksgiving and Christmas the senior center gets the turkeys and hams and we pay for 'em. They cook 'em and we serve the dinners to about ninety seniors over there every year, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We have a lot of

money-making projects, and all of our money goes back into some sort of activity to benefit the town.

Wonderful. Now, on the eyes, is that children and adults, obviously?

Yes, anybody.

That's a wonderful cause. What is that position you said you're finishing?

Deputy District Governor.

And what does a Deputy District Governor do?

Okay, within the state you have four regions: 1, 2, 3, and 4. I was the Deputy District Governor in Region 2, which encompasses all of Elko County, Humboldt County, and Pershing County, and Lander County. It takes in the whole northern half. And then you have Region 1, which is down out of Reno, Region 2 is from Eureka and Austin south, and Region 4 is down in Las Vegas. So I had quite a region to take care of. I had twelve clubs under my jurisdiction, and I have to make sure that these clubs are functioning properly, their bills are paid, they're not behind on their reports or anything like that. What it does is, it takes the legwork away from the Governor—he depends on us to do the work. So we are scattered out pretty thin up here.

Now, about how many members are there here in Battle Mountain?

Right now we have thirty-five members in our club. We have been as high as forty-eight members. But a lot of people have moved out of town, a lot of people have died. We've lost five real good old-time members.

Where do you meet?

At the Nevada Hotel.

Did you have something there last night?

We sure did! We had a dinner meeting last night. We have a directors' meeting on the first Thursday of every month, and then we have two regular meetings: one on the second, and one on the fourth Thursday of the month. So we had our first regular meeting of the month last night.

You have a very busy life, and also one that contributes so much to your community. Is there anything else besides the Lions Club that attracts your interest?

Not in this town. There was a time that I was invited to become a Mason, but I couldn't afford it at that time. I instead joined the Lions Club, and that was when I was working out at Natomas at that time. I suppose—my stepfather was a Mason, my older brother was a Mason, and I still would kind of like to get into the Masons. I have an interest at heart in there. I used to belong to the fire department here, the volunteer fire department. I belonged to them for eleven years. I finally went to a real bad wreck on the highway out here one night, and when I came back I told my wife, "That's it, I'm getting out of it, I can't handle it." So I quit the fire department after eleven years.

You mean that was while you went out with the fire department that you had this bad experience?

Yes, we went out. The local fire department is the ambulance crew too, and we go out when we're called on. And they still do today. It's still a voluntary basis here.

Oh, for goodness sakes. Tell me what you think of the health care system now in Battle Mountain.

I think they have a near first-class health system here now. They have two wonderful doctors, real good doctors there. The hospital has come up real good, the management of it has been excellent. I see a bright future for the hospital and clinic here, as long as they keep running on the basis that they're running now. They're doing real good. Of course they're having a little battle with the state now that this hospital here was built when all the safety factors weren't imposed then, and now they're built-in. And to go back and build-in these safety factors like water sprinklers and one thing and another in the hospital, is almost prohibitive. So what they're looking at, this facility is very inadequate as far as room, bed room, and what they want to do is either expand this hospital or build a new one where they have more bed space. And I really think they should. And then they could use this for long-term health care. And this town has a lot of old people that need long-term health care. The only place they can go right now is the hospital, and they're in there now. So we need to build a new hospital real bad.

And don't some of the residents of Austin have to come here, as well as to Fallon?

They have the option to come here rather than to Fallon, but they choose to go to Fallon, although it's a hundred and twenty-one miles to Fallon and only ninety miles to Battle Mountain.

Has it anything to do with the move of the courthouse?

I definitely believe that there's still a straw in their craw over that.

Now you mentioned a clinic. Do they have a clinic here?

Oh yes, medical clinic, yes.

Tell me about that.

It's directly behind the hospital and it's staffed by the two doctors that ...Well, the doctors work the hospital and the clinic too. They're busier than heck all the time. I saw in the paper the other day some statistics on the clinic up here where they last year—I can't remember the exact figures, but it was something like forty-five patients a day, *average*, forty-five patients a day in that clinic. Not last year, this is in the last three months, I think the last quarter of last year. That's a lot of health care.

Maybe they need nurse practitioners.

It's another thing too, with this hospital up here, they're *equipped* to, but they're not sanctioned to deliver babies up here. So ail of our newborns are in Elko or Winnemucca. That puts quite a burden on...

Especially when you're in a hurry!

You bet! My three granddaughters here in town were all born in Elko.

Do you think they're going to resolve that?

I'm sure they will. They'll *have* to do something about it, yes. It's going to be one of the prerequisites of a new hospital, I would say.

What do you see as the projection here in Battle Mountain in the next ten years, with the economy, the mining, and other factors? What do you see it like in ten years?

Well, I of course, stated before that gold...The town right now, the tax base is, I would say, 80 percent mining and 20 percent agriculture. The rest of it, you don't have that much gambling here, it's not that big. You don't have that many motels, there's not much of a tax base. Your big money comes from mining. Okay, if the price of gold stays at it's present level or even increases—and some fanatics say that [chuckles] it'll go to eight hundred dollars, which I would really have to see it to believe it—but if it stays in the neighborhood of three to four hundred dollars, gold mining will survive and the town will boom and keep going at the present level for the next ten years, and probably be better. There's a lot of room for improvement, and I'm sure, in the lifetime that I've lived here, I've seen so many improvements in this town, and there is a lot more room for improvement. So I'm real optimistic about the town. I've lived here long enough that I've seen it boom and bust three times. And that is due to mining. Mining is so unstable. But right now, with the price of gold, it really looks good, and I don't see any reason why it shouldn't stay that way. I'm hopeful that it will be.

There's one other thing that I'm always interested in, and have been asking, and that's if the children of people like you, this next generation, if they leave, or if they stay around. Tell me where do your children live?

I have one son here, my oldest son is married and has three daughters. I might say that Frances and I have three sons, and I

always wanted a girl, and now all my son has is daughters! [laughs]

Oh, good! You have your granddaughters.

Right. And so he lives here with his wife and three daughters, and he works for Battle Mountain Gold. He's the maintenance superintendent out there. I have two sons in Reno, one who is assistant manager at a Basque Restaurant there called "The Pyrenees." My other son is in the insurance business in Reno. Neither one of them are married.

How old are they?

The youngest one just turned thirty-two. I have another one in Reno who is thirty-seven, and then the one that's here is forty-one.

So your children stayed around in the state—they didn't wander?

They didn't move out of the state. The one that's in the insurance business for a while went to school in Tempe, Arizona, and loved it down there and would like to go back down there, but he's got a good business in Reno right now, doing real well.

I would say the largest percentage of the "children" stay in Nevada or close to home.

Yeah.

That's unusual.

And so many of them wind up in Reno. Very few in Las Vegas, but Reno seems to attract them. My brother-in-law has a boy who graduated from college and couldn't find

a job, so he and his real good friend bought a bar business and small restaurant there in Reno and they are just *flooded* with business, and they're really doing good. So you know, there's always that opportunity knocking. All you gotta do is keep your eyes open. And a lot of the younger generation is doing that.

Well, unless there's something more about Lander County that you forgot to tell me...Is there anything that we might not have covered about this specific area?

Only the flood, the time of the flood.

Describe that to me.

That was a nightmare if there ever was one!

Was that in the early sixties?

Yes, it was 1961.

Tell me about that.

What happened is, we had some rain, and then of course it turned off and froze. And I mean at froze two feet in the ground, just sub-zero temperatures.

What was the temperature?

Thirty-five below zero.

Oh my!

And it froze the ground real solid. Then we got a two-foot snow all the way up the valley. I mean, you're talking eighty miles up the Reese Valley. Then it warmed up and started raining in February. Well, if you're familiar

with snow, snow acts as an insulator. Okay, the ground was frozen. The snow hit on top of it and just kept it frozen, no chance for it to thaw. Then this rain came, and it rained for forty days and forty nights! No place for the water to go, so all the snow melts, and the rain and everything, and here it comes, down the valley. We were living in a house across the tracks over here, and I had a floor furnace in there, and overnight, I got up the next morning, and the water was just up to the top of the floor furnace, had not come in the house yet—and in fact it never did over there. But I've got some pictures I'll show you of the flood. This town, this valley was solid water from that mountain range over there, which is seven miles away, to this mountain range here, which is three miles away, plus eighty miles up the valley was solid water. It was just a big lake, and just pouring down through here.

Did animals drown?

No, fortunately, they got the animals up on high ground. They never lost any animals.

What about people?

People, a lot of them were evacuated out of their houses. I sent Frances to Reno to stay with her sister down there. And at that time I had a bar here, I was in the bar business for six years too.

Oh, see, you didn't tell me that. We gotta get that.

Yeah, I had a bar business and I couldn't leave. I just opened up the back door and the front door and just let the water run through. My business was never so good! I was running around in hip boots, tending bar! [laughter]

Did any homes wash away? Did people lose homes?

No, there was a lot of 'em that really had major damage to 'em. But after the water receded and they dried things off, they lost carpets and floors warped and everything, but you know, people have a way of coping with disasters like that. I feel for these people down south when I see these floods happening. But everybody gets together and it's just a good time. They all work together and get things done, you know. It worked out all right. It wasn't the most comfortable situation, but...

What is the time period that you were involved in this? Was it a week, was it three days, was it a month?

The water was in town for twelve days, and would have been here longer except for the vigilantes that blew up the railroad tracks. You see, what happened, there would not have been any water come into town, had the railroad grade not been higher than the town. The water come down Reese River, no place for it to go, buffered up against that, and it acted just like a dam, come right into, washed right into town. And we tried to get the railroad to blast a hole in that and relieve the situation—they wouldn't do it! So the vigilante committee in town took it on themselves and blasted it and opened up a hole and drained the water through there. Then of course the water went down.

Did people have to use boats, canoes, or anything?

Oh yes! In this house right here, a good friend of mine that I bought this house from, had a boat in his garage, right here, and I can

still remember him pulling out the driveway in a boat. We rescued a lot of people in town in boats.

There must be historic pictures of that.

I've got some pictures, but I don't think there's any of any boats in there. But I can show you the bar that I had, and there was a lamp post at the corner of the bar. My bar was where the Owl Motel is right now.

Oh yes, I know where that is.

And there was a lamp post there, and that was a tie-up for all the boats that wanted to come in. [laughs]

Oh my gosh! You mentioned something about owning a bar. Could you go back to the very beginning, when you first got the idea, and then tell us about that part of your existence?

Okay, in January of 1955 I had an opportunity to buy into a bar business locally here in town. I was working for Magnet Cove Barium at the time, and I wasn't too happy with the work there, and I thought I'd like to venture into something different. So I took 'em up on their offer and I bought this bar business, which was the Battle Mountain Club. Of course everybody in town knew it as "the corner bar."

Where was that located?

Right where the Owl Motel is now. It's the corner of Main Street and 305 South. I bought that in February 1955 and operated that business 'til, to the day, I think it was February 13, 1955 to February 13, 1963. [Narrator later corrects himself, 1959-1965.]

Now I have a lot of questions, because I have no opportunity to be in the bar as it was. Describe it when you first bought it, outside and inside, in some detail.

The building was made of bricks made right here in Battle Mountain over a hundred years ago. It was a very unstable building, but if the walls could talk, they could sure tell a lot of stories. The mortar between the bricks was made right here in town, and you could take a piece of that mortar and grind it up in your fingers, just like granulated sugar. It had gotten wet. And as I say, it served the purpose. It wasn't a very big place: the bar was probably forty feet wide by eighty feet long, and it was about a fifteen-eighteen-stool bar. And I had gambling in there: I had a roulette wheel and "21" table and four slot machines. It was a pretty lucrative business.

Was the Owl Club and Nevada Club here when you opened your bar?

Yes, they had been in business long before I bought the bar.

Were they competition, or how did you become so successful with those two places?

They were competition, they were *good* competition, but I don't know, and I'm not trying to sound like I'm bragging or patting myself on the back, but I seemed to attract the local trade. And I didn't much care about the trade going down the highway. Of course, if they came in, they were treated just like anybody else. But the local people, if you had their business, they are the ones that kept your doors open in the hard times, in the wintertime.

So these were the local people. Now describe to me, on a typical day, from the time—and tell me the time—you opened, until you closed.

I would open at six o'clock in the morning, and there's lots of times that I wouldn't get home [for] maybe two days.

Tell me why would someone come early in the morning to a bar? [chuckles]

[chuckles] That's a good question. But there was an element here in town of old men, and they were mostly all former buckaroos, but they were retired people. They had to have what they called their "eye-opener." And every morning when I would go up there to open that bar at six o'clock in the morning, there was about eight of 'em that would be standing outside waiting for me to open the door. I'd open the door and walk in, and they'd all follow me in, and I'd set up a shot glass in front of every one of 'em and I'd buy 'em the first drink every morning.

Now what was the shot?

An ounce of whiskey.

About what age were these men?

Anywhere from sixty-five to eighty.

Would they wear their cowboy outfits?

Oh yes!

Do you have any pictures of that?

No, I sure don't.

Did you have coffee and food, or only drinks?

No, just drinks. Drinks and gambling.

So now move through your day in that bar. This is six in the morning. How long did these guys stay?

Well usually they'd be all burned out by ten. Ten or eleven o'clock in the morning you could figure they'd be gone home.

Did you eat breakfast?

Oh yes, I'd eat before I'd go to work.

Oh, that early. So then what was the next thing?

The next thing was, you had the usual during-the-day trade, mid-afternoon trade, which is mainly tourist traffic. Once in a while you would get somebody local that would come in and just...A lot of times just to come in and converse, you know. But then the evening business was always a good business. You always had the banker come in, old Ray Foote—he was a banker. And a lot of people like that, that used to come down there. And I had a table set back in the corner, and I have it out in my garage right today, a poker table, a round poker table. And they would come in there, and I have seen some of the damndest poker games at that table, you can't believe. The ante was twenty-five cents, to get the game started, with twenty-five cents. But the first card might cost you five hundred dollars!

Oh my gosh!

Oh, they were wild! I've seen as high as \$4,000 in one pot. These games would go on sometimes all night long. When they weren't playing poker, they were playing pinochle, or they were playing...Oh, there was another

game...Pangini! which is an Italian game, and that's hard to explain, and it's been so long since I've played it that I couldn't tell you how to play it now.

Now, their playing cards didn't bring you any income—was it because they'd keep drinking?

Oh yeah, they'd drink all the time they're playing too.

Did you serve any food at all through the day or night?

None. What happened, if somebody wanted something to eat, the Nevada Hotel was right next door. They would ask me if I'd go get them a hamburger or steak or whatever, and sure, I'd run down there and get it for 'em.

Would you bring your own meals over?

No.

Where did you eat?

I'd eat supper at home and breakfast at home and I wouldn't eat any lunch.

Would you close it while you went home for supper?

I had a bartender. See, I would take the evening shift most of the time. For the first year, I run the whole thing myself, and then I found out that I couldn't do it. So I hired me an old buckaroo bartender. In fact, he was with the people that I bought the bar from before, and just as honest as the day was long. So I had him open up every morning, and then I would come in about four o'clock in the afternoon. And then I'd work from four

o'clock until I closed—sometimes four or five in the morning, sometimes not 'til the *next* day.

Oh my goodness! Now I have several questions: What were the most popular drinks?

I sold an *awful* lot of beer, but I think hard liquor, the main drink was 7-up highball, whiskey and 7-up.

Did women come in?

Oh yes!

With the men, or by themselves?

By themselves, and with men too.

Was there flirtation?

Never any problem. Never any problem. I think that's why women came in my bar, because they knew that they would be treated like a woman, and I had respect for them, and they enjoyed that.

Now, I want to find out about the gambling. Did you have the machines?

I had two nickel machines, a dime machine, and a quarter machine.

Now, were those leased or bought?

They were my machines.

Tell, me, because I've been curious, how does that work?

Okay, you pay—at that time, it was only three percent of your gross, to the state, every

quarter. You paid two hundred and fifty dollars *per* machine to the federal government.

How often?

Every year. So it cost me a thousand dollars for those four machines, every year to the federal government, *plus* three percent of my gross take to the state. I kept track of all the jackpots that were paid out, and then you subtract that from what you took in, and that's what you paid.

But how did you get the machines?

I bought 'em from the people that had the bar before.

What do you pay for those?

Well, at that time, it was a token payment. I think they were only fifty dollars a machine.

How do you keep them in good order?

I operated on them myself.

Did you have any cheating or any problems with the machines?

Never did. One time one guy came in and started cheating and I caught him at it and run him off. Soon as they find out that you're not puffing up with it and that you know what you're doing in the business, they'll leave you alone.

Now, you had tables, you said?

Yes, I had a "21" table and a roulette wheel.

Who ran that?

I did.

How'd you learn?

I dealt prior to taking over the bar. I dealt for the owner of the Nevada Hotel for a year.

What year was that?

I'm going to back up too, because I realize I made a mistake on my timing. I bought the bar in 1959 and closed it down in 1965, that was it. So the time that I dealt for the Nevada Hotel was 1957 to 1958. And I dealt e craps and roulette and "21."

And who taught you?

The dealers that were there.

Was this in the interim between jobs at the mines?

Yes.

And sometimes did you work at night while you had other jobs?

Uh-huh, in fact I held two jobs at once. I worked for a guy that had the Union bulk plant here, and I delivered fuel for him all day long, and then worked at the Nevada Hotel at night for a year.

So you didn't see your family very much.

No, I didn't, and I tell you, that wears on you pretty fast too. I'd get off work delivering fuel and get home, take a bath and eat supper, and lay down for a half-hour and have to go to work again.

Oh my! So that was hard on the family.

Oh yes! It sure was. I have a very understanding wife. She has to be, to put up with me for forty-five years. [laughs]

Well you've been so diligent about supporting your family so I'm sure it's a two-way street. Let's move to the outside of the bar. Describe the outside of the bar. What kind of advertising did you have on it to attract people, what was the name?

I had on the west end of the bar a big sign painted on there by one of the liquor distributors, and he did it free, a big sign that said, "You're lucky to live in America," advertising Lucky Lager Beer.

Oh, that's really clever!

He was a distributor for Lucky Lager Beer, and of course if I bought the beer from him, he would paint the sign, and he did. And it was probably fifteen feet high by twenty or thirty feet long.

That was great advertising. And what was the name of your bar?

Battle Mountain Club. I had a neon sign in front with that on there.

Great. So that was all new when you bought it—not with the former owners? The sign?

No, the sign was on there before—the neon sign was there.

But what about the "Lucky to live in America"? That was all your doing?

I had that put on there.

What did the front of the bar/club look like?

Well, I had a walk-through door, the extra-wide, glass, walk-through door. And then one big bay window in front. And then along the west wall there were three other windows. And on the back wall facing the alley there was one window.

Do you have any photographs of that bar?

Uh-huh, only during the flood, and I'll show you those.

Then describe the interior a little more to me, because there are all kinds of bars. What was your actual bar like?

Very plain. It was very plain. From the floor up, halfway...The ceiling was twelve-foot high, and from the floor up, halfway, you had wood around the walls. And from there on up it was stucco over brick. And like I say, the bricks were made right here in Battle Mountain over a hundred years ago. And I kept that in good repair all the time. I had it painted periodically, so it'd look neat. It had two overhead fans, similar to what I have here, only I mean *real old-time*—they were antique fans.

Were they there when you got the place?

Yes.

Was it a real, real dark bar?

No, it had plenty of light. I believed if they wanted to make love, they could go out in their car or go home and do it. [laughter]

How many tables besides the one where they played poker? Or did everyone sit at the bar?

Everyone sat at the bar. I didn't have any cocktail tables. I take it back! For a while I

had about seven cocktail tables, and I had to crowd those in pretty close. I want to say that I was the one that started live music in a bar in Battle Mountain.

Oh, really?!

With a very good friend of mine who lived over here in Beowawe. His name was Garn Littledike. His nickname was Spanky Littledike. His parents were ranchers over in Beowawe, and he was an *excellent* guitarist. And at the time he started out in show business, he could sing and sound—if you turned your back you couldn't tell it wasn't Johnny Cash singin'.

Oh my, was it country western?

Yes, all country western. And so I got him on Saturday night to come in and start playing at nine o'clock at night, and sometimes we would still be going at noon the next day.

Oh, my gosh!

I mean, that bar was just crammed full! And I had one bartender and myself taking care of that, and I'll tell you, it kept us jumpin'.

Did they give him tips? Is that how he made his...

No, no, I paid him, every weekend.

Was it every Saturday night?

Every Saturday night for about a year-and-a-half, and then he got the big head and moved on to bigger times.

Oh, that sounds like a lot of fun.

He made a name for himself pretty good, down around the Carson/Minden area.

Anything more about the bar activity that you want to share?

You know, you were telling me about these tapes that you're making here. It's just too bad that somebody of your caliber wasn't here to squeeze a little history out of these cowboys that were settin' there waitin' for me every morning. They could tell you stories that would curl your hair, and they were all true. I used to look forward to going to work every morning just to talk to those guys. And you know, it's funny, those oldtimers would get in the bar, and after the first two or three drinks—and none of 'em ever had any breakfast, you know. They'd have a little coffee and that was it. They'd get to arguing amongst themselves, and you'd swear that they were bitter enemies. Somebody'd come in there and listen to 'em, they'd swear they're bitter enemies. But you say one thing against one of 'em, and you had 'em all to whip! [laughs] Because they were really, really close. I'll tell you somethin' about ownin' a bar: it's an experience that everybody should go through, but I would never do it again. It's a very enlightening experience. I met a world of wonderful people. I met some people that weren't quite so wonderful, but you have that in every industry. But it's an experience that you have to go through to really appreciate. My son there in Reno is, like I say, the assistant manager of The Pyrenees Bar and Grill there, and he is the main bartender, and he's getting quite a lesson there too.

Now, when did you decide to sell the bar?

Well, the building didn't belong to me. I bought the bar business. The building I rented. In 1965, the person that owned the building

decided that he was going to sell it, and he gave me first refusal. But at that time, I had no inkling that Battle Mountain Gold or anybody was going to be moving in here. He wanted \$68,000 just for the building. In 1965, that was a hell of a lot of money! And I thought, "\$68,000?! I'll never live long enough to pay that off!" So I passed it up, and Butch Hinman bought it and tore it down and built the motel there. So that was the end of my venture into the bar business.

So you were pushed out of it, in a sense, when you couldn't buy it.

In a sense, yeah.

It wasn't where you made a decision, "This is it."

No, it wasn't my decision. Ultimately it was, because I had to make up my mind to buy or get out. I decided, "Well, I'm not going to tie the family down to any more years like this."

Right. And so then did you get back into mining?

That's when I got back into mining, yes.

Now, is there anything else we forgot?

I don't think so. I've been trying to wrack my brain, but I can't think of anything else. I think we've covered it pretty well.

Well, this has been a wonderful interview. You've brought a lot of new information to the project that wasn't in here before, so it's very valuable. And again, on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for sharing with us.

It's really been my pleasure.

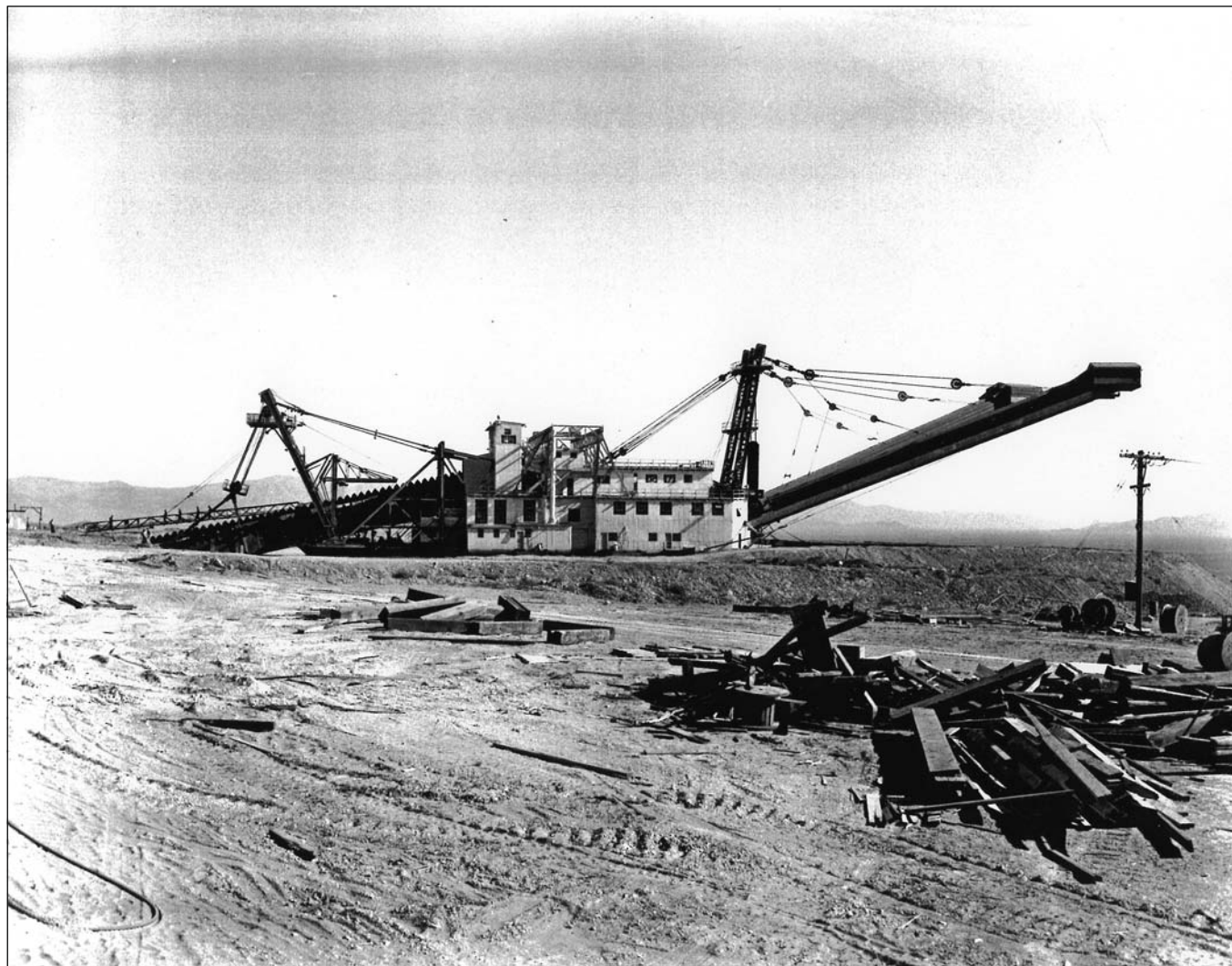
Thank you.

JOHN WILLIAMS
PHOTOGRAPHS



JOHN WILLIAMS, MAY 14, 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Main gold dredge at Natomas, January 1950

(Photograph provided by Bruce Swackhamer)

JOHN WILLIAMS
ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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JOSEPH CHESTER YOUNG**PREFACE**

Joseph Chester Young's paternal grandfather was Brigham Young, Jr. Born in Idaho in 1911, Chester grew up in a family of thirteen children. The beginning of his ranching experience was helping his father on the family farm in Idaho.

Chester met his wife, Nelda, at Brigham Young University and they married in the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah. After leasing a farm in Southern Utah with his brother for two years, they purchased a cattle ranch which they sold sixteen years later. Interested in more cattle, Chester heard about the livestock at the Smoky Valley Ranch, Nevada and drove two hundred and eighty miles to purchase cattle. The owner took him on horseback to the summer range and Chester made a deal on the cattle. However he learned over dinner that they would only sell the cattle with the ranch. Chester saw the ditches where water came off the mountains, and the creeks, and envisioned a waterwheel creating electricity. He agreed to buy the ranch

too. This was 1950. Nelda and the children remained in Utah for three years where the children attended school, while Chester stayed on the ranch. He developed the water system, and had an hydroelectric plant installed which provided them with electricity.

With the help of his brother and sons, they developed a successful alfalfa hay ranch, selling the hay to California dairies. They invested in equipment and eventually started the Young Brothers Trucking business, hiring drivers to transport the hay to California, and hauling "everything"—cattle, potatoes, lumber—on the return trips.

Their cattle ranching expanded too. They sold the calves and the older cows went to the California market for slaughtering. Nelda and Chester have nine children. Three sons and their growing families live on the ranch and manage the operations. Chester and Nelda, finally with the freedom to travel, went on a mission to Florida and take trips to visit family members. They enjoy their large family and all the grandchildren who are an important part of their daily life.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Chester Young at his home, at Smoky Valley, Austin, Nevada, on June 19, 1993.

Good morning, Mr. Young. It's a pleasure to be here to interview you this morning. Would you give us your full name?

Chester Young: Joseph Chester Young.

Where were you born?

Driggs, Idaho.

And when?

April 16, 1911.

Can you tell us your paternal grandfather's name?

Brigham Young, Jr.

Of course that's one of the most famous names in the Mormon religion. Tell me about Brigham Young, Jr., who his mother was. Do you know that?

Mary Ann Angel.

Is he the only one named Brigham Young, Jr.? Or are there others?

The only one that I know of.

Where was he born, do you know?

Kirtland, Ohio, December 18, 1836.

Did you know him?

When I was real small, he came to my father's ranch, and I met him, but I don't really remember him that well.

Can you tell us who your paternal grandmother was?

Catherine Curtis Spencer.

Did you know your her?

No, I didn't.

So we're going to move to your parents. Tell me your father's name.

My father's name was George Spencer Young.

And where was he born?

He was born in Salt Lake City [April 27, 1868].

What was your mother's name?

Martha Rigby.

Can you tell us where she was born and when?

She was born in Newton, Utah, out of Logan, September 20, 1873.

Did your parents tell you how they met?

Yes. My mothers folks, William F. Rigby, moved up to Rigby, Idaho. In fact, the town of Rigby was named after him. And they lived there, and my father studied law. And then his health broke, and they told him if he lived, he'd

have to get out in the country. And so he came up to Idaho, and that's where he met my mother.

And so then they married. And how many children were born to your family?

Thirteen children.

Thirteen! And where were you in that sequence?

I was the youngest boy. There was three girls after myself.

So you have a very large family. Although we're concentrating on Lander County, I just want to know a little bit about what it was like. How long did you live in Newton, Utah?

No, I didn't live there at all. Well, we came to school down to Logan. This was later on in years. Where we lived was where my father moved to after he was married up at Driggs, Idaho.

So you lived in Idaho. How long did you live there? How old were you when you left there?

I was twelve years old.

So you lived there quite a while. Where did the family go after you left?

Driggs, Idaho? We moved down north of Idaho Falls, on a ranch, on a farm there.

I see, your father bought a ranch?

Yes, just north of Idaho Falls.

What kind of a ranch was that?

It was a farm more than a ran we raised potatoes and grain and wheat and what-not.

Was that the start of your intense experience in ranching?

Pretty well, yes, it was.

Describe the kind of work you dad there. You were a teenager then.

Yes. Well, we had a two-way plow, and we'd hitch three head of horses on it and I plowed quite a lot of ground at that time, and helped Father on the farm.

Was it your brothers and father who worked the farm?

Pretty well. However, all my brothers were older than myself, and they were off to school, most of them.

Where did they go to school?

Well, to Logan and to eventually BYU (Brigham Young University). And also, each one of my brothers went on missions for the Church.

So was it mainly you and your dad who did the ranching?

Pretty well, the farming.

Were the girls allowed to do farming? Did they get involved?

The girls also went into school teaching.

I see, the older ones.

I had five sisters that taught school.

Oh, how wonderful!

All over, up in that country.

Did you enjoy that experience, learning to do the ranching? Was it something you loved?

Yes, I liked it.

Did you go to school there on that ranch? Where did you go to school?

Yes, they had a local school there. That's where I graduated from the eighth grade.

What did you do about high school? Did you go to high school?

Yes, I went to Idaho Falls to high school.

I see. Did you have to leave home to do that?

No, there was a neighbor that went to school, and he and I would ride together into high school. Six miles, it was.

Oh, that was close. Were there any specific subjects that you began to become more interested in than others?

Oh, not really, until I got into college. And then I kind of took a commercial course.

Where did you go to college?

BYU. I might mention there, my father said, "It looks like all the children are going away to school, so I'd better move down to Provo also!" So he sold out the farm and moved down to Provo.

And what did he do there? Or was he retired by then?

Well, yes, but he got into politics a little there. He quite enjoyed life there.

What did your mom do?

Just a housekeeper.

Did she get involved with the Church or activities?

Yes, she did. She was Relief Society President there for a while.

Oh was she?! That's interesting to know. Now, you went to college and took a commercial course?

Yes, regular course there. I didn't take any specific subject.

But that probably helped you in what you were doing later.

It did.

When you graduated college, what did you do then?

Well, I was looking [chuckles] for a wife, and the last year there at college, why, I met my wife.

Nelda was going to college at the same time?

Yes.

Oh, that was fortunate for both of you!

The year before, I had met her, and then she went home for that summer, and then she came back again the next spring.

And where was her home?

It was in Dublan, Mexico, down in the State of Chihuahua.

Ah! Well I'll ask her more about how she got up to Utah. I won't ask you that. So after you met, how long was your courtship?

Well, it was too long, according to me! [laughter] It was two years, because she went back home, and her mother had passed away, and she was the older daughter of the family, and her father felt like he needed her there. So she stayed there that summer, and then came back to school the following winter. And then in the spring is when we got married.

How old were you?

I was twenty-eight years old.

Oh, that is older for that time period.

Yes.

And how old was Nelda?

She'd just turned twenty.

So she was much younger. Can't blame her for waiting! [laughs]

Yes, she was younger.

Where did you marry?

In the Salt Lake Temple.

When was that?

September 1941.

Are you allowed to describe your wedding to us?

As I say, her mother had passed away, and we had her brother and his wife, and my mother and father and a number of my mother's Relief Society sisters from Provo were there with us.

Did you get to go on a honeymoon?

Well, my brother was a doctor there in Salt Lake and he got us an apartment afterwards, and so we stayed in Salt Lake and went to different recreation areas there.

So you started to settle in an apartment? Was it an apartment to use, or to live in?

Just to use while we were first married.

When you were first married, where did you both go to establish your first home together?

We went to Provo, and I, with my father, had some property there, and I built a four-apartment home there, just down from Brigham Young University.

When you say you built it, you mean physically? or with help?

Well, my father had a carpenter that had built *his* house just previous to that, and this same carpenter, I talked to him., and he says, "Great, I'll help you." And so we built these four apartments.

Oh, wonderful! So you rented three and lived in one?

Uh-huh.

There's your commercial brains!

That's the way we did it for years.

That's part of it—that was very smart. And what kind of work did you do?

I worked for the State Road, up Prove Canyon, for two summers there—whole years.

Two whole years.

Uh-huh.

And was your family starting by then? Did you start to have children by then?

No, not 'til after we left Provo and came out.

So what did Nelda do during those two years?

Well, she helped my father with the garden and all such things. And she was busy in the Church too.

Yeah, good. Okay, then what did you do when your job there ended? What did you do then?

Just stayed. That's when we decided to come out into farming—come out in Southern Utah on a farm.

The two of you?

Yes, and my brother Ted was with us.

How much older was Ted?

He was eight years older than I.

Oh! he was quite a bit older.

Yes.

Was he married?

He had been, and then they divorced.

Oh, that's unfortunate. Now, when you said "we went farming"—did you go to work for someone who had a ranch?

No, we leased a farm.

What kind of a farm?

It was grain, barley, and potatoes and just regular farming.

What kind of living arrangements were there on the farm?

Well, it had an extra couple of rooms.

A little house?

Yes. My brother lived in them, and we lived in the other part of the house.

How long did you stay there on that farm?

We only stayed there two summers, and then a ranch came up for sale, a cattle ranch.

There in the same area?

Yes, within nine miles of where we were farming.

And you were able, you had sufficient finances?

Well, that's when I sold my apartment house in Provo to Brigham Young University,

and that gave me enough money to make a down payment on the ranch.

And did you go into partnership with your brother?

Yes he had some income also.

Was he still single?

Yes, he was still single.

And so describe to me, just briefly, the life on that farm. Were you starting to have your children by then?

Yes, our oldest boy and girl had come along. Well, we bought a herd of cattle with the ranch. There were two hundred and eighty head of cattle.

Was that the first time you were working with a lot of cattle?

Yes.

So that gave you good experience?

Yes.

And how long did you and your brother and Nelda stay on that ranch?

We were there sixteen years.

Oh, that's wonderful! Tell me just briefly, from the time you got it, until you left, what kind of progress was made, or changes.

Well, it was a little different than the other farm that we had been on—it was mostly meadow grass. And it had range rights with the farm, which allowed us to run the cattle

out on the mountain. And that's what we did, and we put up wild grass hay off the meadow. We had a little patch of alfalfa, but not much. And it had a pretty nice house on it, and we lived there. However, our neighbors next wanted the ranch. I mean, he and his brothers owned the rest of the valley there.

Oh, so they wanted to buy that property?

They wanted to buy that property from us. And so, eventually, we succumbed and sold it to them.

What were your plans for yourself when you were selling it to them?

I had been interested in buying some more cattle—both brother and I had been interested. And we knew a cattle buyer down at Pioche, Nevada. And he told me about *this* ranch, where I could buy some cattle. And he had bought cattle from these people. And he said, "You'll have to go early in the morning over there, 'cause their cattle are up on the summer range, and they'll ride with you and go see em.

What year was this?

This was 1950. And so I came over here. I was over here by six o'clock in the morning. That was two hundred and eighty miles.

Did your brother come too?

No, he didn't come with me.

You were going to make the decision?

And so I came over here and we got on horses and rode over on our summer range and took us all day. We saw about a hundred

and fifty head of cattle. I always said we saw more sage hens and deer than we did cattle. And then we rode back. That was close to sixty miles we rode that day. And we got back here, and the wife had dinner ready. Now, I might mention right there that the wife and her husband were the only two on this ranch, and she was cooking for two of *his* brothers.

What kind of a house was there?

The big house was down here.

The big house here...

That we tore down.

Oh, it's torn down?

Well, yeah, torn down. We was gonna remodel it, but the foundation wasn't such... Well, anyhow, she had dinner ready, and I'd already made a deal on a hundred and twenty-five head of cattle up there with her husband. And when we got back here and we had our dinner, I wanted to go on back over to the ranch, but they said, "Oh, it's too late." And I said to 'em, "I would like to pay you down on these cattle now, and I'll get 'em the first of November, if that's agreeable." And she spoke up and she said, "No way are we going to sell any cattle unless we sell the ranch too."

Oh! How interesting! So what did you think?

Well, I said, "Well, I can't pay you anything on the ranch. She said, "Well, just pay down on the ranch and not on the cattle." And I knew what my wife would say if I got back home and told her I'd bought another ranch! So anyway, that's what I did. I ended up—we bought the ranch for \$38,000.

Now, did you buy it right then, or did you go home and talk it over?

I paid her down on the ranch, right then.

Now what about your brother? Was he going to be in on it?

Yes.

But they trusted your decision, apparently.

Well, I can see why she wanted out of here. She was teaching school down here in a little schoolhouse on the place and cooking for his brothers, and she was just sick of it, she wanted out.

Did her husband agree? Apparently.

Yes, he agreed.

Where were they going to go?

They went, eventually, up to Washington.

Oh, they left the area.

Yeah, they left the area.

Now, I want you to describe to me, when you first came, with fresh eyes, to this place, thinking of what it is now, just describe what it looked like when you bought it. There's the house—what else was there?

That's a the house and a big patch of willows up this side of the house. And water was their problem. Their father had put in cisterns up along here. When the water dried up in the spring, see, after the runoff, why, they filled these cisterns, and that's what they drew water out of. But when we came, unless it was

a real heavy moisture year, why, they didn't even have water down here to the house.

Did you know all that when you bought it?

Pretty well, yes.

Was there any electricity?

No electricity.

Was there any plumbing?

No plumbing. [chuckles] Outside.

So it was pretty rustic.

And they only raised just about twenty acres of hay on this whole deal. Well, of alfalfa, I should say. Down below they had a meadow where they put up some grass hay.

Uh-huh, and so maybe it was ranging for the cattle?

That's all. Just enough for their horses, and enough maybe to have some for their cattle.

They had horses? Were they selling the horses too?

No, they were just saddle horses.

What was the road like in front of the...

Well, that was the main road going to Tonopah.

Was it paved?

No, just gravel.

Wasn't paved? Even in the fifties? Just gravel?

Just gravel road. They had, across all of these different ditches—well, I call 'em ditches, but they were water coming off the mountain, off these different canyons. They had bridges across each one.

What time of the year was it when you came? What month? Or what season?

It was the last of May.

Was it a pretty time?

Yes, it was.

Did the mountains still have a little snow on top?

Right.

Did you have mixed feelings, or did you think, "Gee, this is a good opportunity"?

Let me carry on: After that night—they insisted that I stay here overnight—and they'd show me what they had the next day. And they took me up here and showed me all these cricks [creeks] across here that were running a big stream of water. And I thought, "Well, hey, this is my life's dream." I was raised with a young fellow up in Driggs, Idaho, and his father had a waterwheel on the Teton River. And I used to go down—it made the electricity for the town of Driggs. And I used to go down with this boy and watch that waterwheel run.

You didn't know it would be so valuable!

And when I saw this up here, I thought, "This is the perfect place for a waterwheel, these two cricks, these two canyons right up here."

And so that helped.

Yes. And so they showed me all what they had, and it looked good to me.

How many acres were involved with that purchase?

Oh, eight hundred and sixty acres. That doesn't seem like much money at the time.

Tell me this: Were you concerned about finding out if there was a Mormon community nearby?

Yes, because I had a man out here with me at the time. Later on when came over, I brought this man out and he was a strong Catholic. And that's the first thing that we went in to Austin, to see if there was a Catholic church or a Mormon church. And they told him that the Catholic bishop came once a month, and there wasn't really any activity. And then there was only one Mormon family in here.

Before you, and so you were the second. Was that okay with your wife...and you?

Well, we didn't move out here permanently for another three or four years.

Now who was this man you said was the Catholic, you said who came with you? Who was he? Was he going into the ranch with you, or moving here?

No, he'd rented some of my ground over on the Utah ranch and raised potatoes. He just came out and wanted to see the country.

Was he interested in moving here, if he wanted to see if there was a Catholic church?

Yes, I think so.

Did he move out?

No.

Now, when did Nelda first see this ranch?

In 1953, as I recall.

You bought it in 1950?

Yes.

Did you have pictures or anything to show her?

No, I just told her about it—told her about the cricks and about the...

Would you all come out here? No, for three years she didn't come.

No, no, because on that ranch over there, and we had children of school age, so we took them to Delta, Utah to school. That was a hundred miles from the ranch.

Did you live there while they went to school?

She did, and I stayed on the ranch. I told her, "This is for the birds! If we're going to be a family, we gotta get together."

So what did you do to get together?

Moved out here.

Now, let's back up a little. What happened with this ranch here while you were back there?

We just went off and left it. It was left alone. I might go back a little: When I bought the ranch, I had some attorneys draw up the contract and they put in all the water rights. When we moved out here, why, I went up to

Kingston to get our water, and they said, "We bought the water."

Who's "We"?

People from California had bought the Kingston Ranch, and they said, "We bought the water," and really, I think it was just a misunderstanding. It was too bad. It was sad, really. See, they'd bought it from one of the brothers. Charlie and his wife and two bachelors lived here.

Oh, they owned other property?

Yes, they owned over here at Gillman and all of Kingston. This wasn't the only ranch.

Oh! So they sold all of them?

Yes. This other brother sold the Kingston Ranch, and he also sold the water rights. So it was, as I say, a sad deal when we come to find out. And these attorneys had really made a strong contract, that this ranch got all the water.

But did you get some of it?

Well, it went in a ten-year adjudication. And the state took it over and they checked all of these streams of water across here. And because this meadow down here had an 1884 water right, why, they actually ended up, they give us more water than what we bought.

Wonderful. Now, I want to back up again. What was happening with all the cattle while you were gone?

I took them over to the other ranch.

Oh, okay! How'd you do that? In big trucks?

Yeah, in big trucks.

Oh, okay, I was worried about the cattle!
[laughs]

Yes, we took the cattle over there.

So it was fine to leave this here.

Yes.

And the house locked up?

Well, we lost some things here. I left some good dogs over here, and twice when I came back, why, the dogs were laying out on the lawn—somebody had shot 'em.

Oh! So how often would you come back during the three-year period?

Oh, I'd come back maybe once a month.

To just kind of look things over?

Yeah.

When you bought it, and when you were coming back, did you start to have a plan of when you would move here?

Well, yes, we did. There's a lot of things happened between the time we bought it and before we moved here. My brother the doctor in Salt Lake had died with a brain tumor. That changed the plans somewhat. And then we got sale for our ranch over on the Utah-Nevada line.

So when you moved your whole family here, what time of the year was that?

It was in the spring of the year, after school had let out over there in Delta.

Okay, getting towards summer. I want to know when you came with your whole family, did you move into the little house that was still here? Or had you started to fix up things to prepare for their arrival?

No, we moved in the big house, the Schmidtlein big house down there.

They had a big house?

Yes, it was torn down.

Was it in pretty good condition to move your family into?

Yes, it was. They had had a leather shop and that in it, and made their own bridles and saddles and what-not.

What did Nelda say when she first saw everything?

Well, I told her this was a better ranch than the other one [chuckles], and after she looked around, she agreed it was.

How did the kids adjust?

Good.

Now, when you came to move, your brother was with you too?

Yes.

Just your brother, and you, and your immediate family?

Uh-huh.

Now, when you then came. tell me—this is three years later—were there any changes in the three years?

No, really, the place had deteriorated, because nobody had been here, and the water adjudication wasn't settled. But we did move the cattle over here, and the cattle range was still good, and we proceeded to try to put up enough grass hay to feed the cattle.

Were any of your boys big enough to start helping you and your brother?

Yes.

How old were the older boys?

Well, Lavar went on a mission to Florida, and then he was called right into the Army in World War II.

So did you have any sons big enough to start?

Well, just Ralph and Darrel here.

Were they teenagers?

Yes, they helped.

So you and your brother and your sons: Tell me how you started to get the ranch in shape.

Well, mainly by developing the water here. That was the *main* thing, because they didn't even have water here in the afternoon. The first thing after the family moved over here, I bought a two-inch plastic pipe and run clear up here to nearly the top of the canyon, and that's the only way we had water down here at the place. And the kids really thought that was great, because I had it up in a tree. In the afternoon, the water was hot, coming out of that pipe.

Oh, you took your showers there.

Yeah, they'd bathe out there.

Was there a steady flow of water?

Out of the canyons, yes. But this bench is alluvial formation and the water sinks real bad. That means real rocky. and like a sieve. The water sinks. In fact, you could come down, maybe a big stream of water would be coming out of these canyons, and you could walk down along the crick and just see it disappear.

Aha, so that was your main source of water. Was there enough for irrigation?

No, only when real high waters or a lot of snow on these mountains. That's the only time they could irrigate.

Were you able to start growing anything yet?

Not very much. What we started right out doing, I had considerable money from the other ranch, and we put in a twelve-inch pipeline up here. That was a mile-and-a-quarter of pipeline.

Using the same water?

Yes, out of the canyons.

Did you all do it yourselves?

We did a lot of it. Yes, pretty well all did it ourself my brother and myself. After we put the pipeline in and got that water down here, that's when we started to be interested in a hydroelectric plant.

You mean your own hydroelectric plant?

Well, we didn't have one. We heard that they had a hydroelectric plant down in Death Valley, and we went down and looked

at that one. And they had had that one in for twenty-two years, and it was running and making power. And someone told us about a hydroelectric man up in Boise, Idaho. We finally got his address and called him. We told him that we were interested in a hydro plant. He swore a little and said, "Good Hell, I didn't think there was enough water in all of Nevada to run a hydro plant." And I said, "Well, if you'll come down, why, I think we have adequate water." And so, in about a week, he came down here.

Now how long was that after you first came here to the ranch? I mean, moved here permanently.

Well, that was a year after, before we had this pipeline mostly in.

Aha, and then the hydro plant, when did that go up?

We've had the hydro plant in twenty-eight years this year. I don't recall just what year that we bought it.

Was it soon after, a couple of years after you were here? Or longer than that?

Three years after we were here.

Is it on the ranch where I can get a photograph of it?

Yes.

What were the results, what were you able to do after that plant was in? What did it help you do? Describe for me.

Oh, it started right in making electricity. We were the only lights in the whole valley.

Oh, there was no electricity yet?

No, electricity here at all, anywhere.

Oh, so this was in the late fifties, early sixties?

Late fifties.

So you had no electricity until that came in?

No electricity at all. And we put up three big poles, and they could see our lights from all over the valley.

And they were jealous?

Well, we had lots of people come here that'd break down or something. They'd see our lights and come in all times of the night and day.

So life then became...

Well, it was different.

Could you then have radios?

We did then. We had electricity, we had power.

Did you have a telephone?

Yes, there's always been a telephone down through the valley.

Oh good, good. So now you have the water and electricity. Did you start to buy equipment to do the haying?

Yes, soon as we got water down here to irrigate with, why, then we started to develop the ground.

When you first came and you saw what your land was, did you already start to plan and

envision what kind of ranching you would be doing?

Uh-huh.

Tell me what that was.

The California dairies and market was very good for alfalfa hay.

You had investigated, researched that?

Yes.

You, yourself?

Uh-huh.

And at first, why, I used to sell the hay to truckers that would come in here. But sometimes they'd pay you for it, and sometimes they wouldn't. So I decided that didn't work very good. But we started right in and put in several hundred acres of alfalfa hay.

To sell?

Uh-huh, to sell and to use here.

How did you then develop your market for selling it to California? Tell me how you did that.

The California hay is low in protein, and this is high in fruit protein and nutrients, and they just really went for it.

But how did they know that you were here?

Well, they'd test it, and...

No, but how did you let them know you were here and what you were doing? How did you communicate?

Well, we just got a list of the different dairies down there and went and showed them the hay.

You went personally?

We built up our market, yes.

I want you to describe that a little more.

Well, when they'd see the hay and they were testing there in California, the hay, and when they saw the high tests on it, they said, "Gee! If this is true..." And when they fed it to their cattle, and I've had a number of them said the milk production increased nearly double, feeding Nevada hay.

Okay, I want to know, when you would go to California, did you go alone?

No, I'd go with a truck driver that would come and buy the hay, or get the hay here. And my brother went part of the time, and I went part of the time.

You'd take a truckful of hay?

A truckload of hay, yeah.

Tell me where in California these dairies were. What parts of California would you go to?

Most of it goes south of Sacramento into Central Valley—Modesto, Lodi, Turlock, Manteca, Selma, et cetera. Also into the Los Angeles Basin.

How long did it take to build that up into a prosperous kind of work?

Two years, why, we had all the customers we needed for our hay, because of the increase in milk production that they got from the hay.

You were giving really good quality. And you're still doing that?

Yes.

Is that the main focus of your ranching?

Well, the cattle are important also. Our income is just as great from the cattle as from the hay.

What kind of equipment did you have to buy as you were developing this commercial aspect of your hay? What kind of equipment and how much equipment did you have to invest in?

Yes, we had to buy hay balers and swathers to cut the hay, and also to start with, why, we handled it by hand, but afterwards I was able to buy a harrow bed from California that picks up the hay and stacks it like you saw the stack down there. And it took considerable equipment. We bought two tractors to go with the swathers.

Where did you buy all this equipment?

I bought the harrow bed in California, and one John Deere tractor in California at a sale. And then I bought two other tractors out of Utah from dealers up there, because I had been dealing with these people from over on the other ranch.

Now, were you the main one to do this? What was your brother's role?

Well, he loved prospecting, and I did most of the ranching. He used to prospect, which has turned out real good. Some of his claims are still paying us.

Was that also part of the partnership?

Yes.

Did you share everything?

Yes, we shared.

What kind of prospecting? What did he find? Silver? Gold? Turquoise?

Well, gold and silver.

Where?

Well, the claims that have paid us the best are up at Battle Mountain. Nevada Gold is up by their claims. He had claims on this mountain also, and they've since come in. See, after he passed away, I didn't keep them up.

When did he pass away?

January 28, 1971. Well, he took up claims, but also, he was quite a mechanic, and he used to keep the machinery in repair for me.

Did he stay a bachelor all the years?

Well, he married a woman up in Salt Lake for a year, but that didn't work out. She didn't want to come out here, so that didn't work out. What eventually took his life—he was working at a mine up here. They had him repairing an air tank, and it blew up.

Oh, so it was a terrible accident.

Yeah, it was—terrible accident. The doctor told me that his head was like an egg that had been dropped from a two-story window, it was that bad.

That must have been very hard. Now as your sons were getting older—because I know the

major role they play in the ranch and in the future of your ranch—tell me how their roles started to develop, how they were helping you, and how you were teaching them.

I was taught that you have to really work for what you have and take responsibility and be responsible and be good citizens. And I tried to teach 'em that and to stay with a job 'til it was finished, and make do with what you had. So they grew up with that idea, and of course all the time we were helping them to go to college, and keeping them when they were on their missions. I never did encourage them to come back to the ranch.

Oh, is that right?

Never did, no. And I said, "Go out and try what you want to try."

Wonderful father!

"And maybe you'll find something better than ranching." And one-by-one, they'd call me up after they were in construction or in this or that, and they'd say, "Dad, we'd like to come back to the ranch." And I said, "Well, there's a place here for you."

Oh, wonderful father. Were there good schools close enough for them to go through high school here? Or did they have to go away?

No, they went to high school here in Austin. And then they'd go away to college. Yes, the high school was alright.

Was it you and your sons mainly, and a little bit your brother—were you the ones that did all the farming, or did you hire other help to help you.

No, we pretty well did all the farming. They would come home in the summer and

help us. That's when it was lots of hand work—didn't have machinery that would handle the bales and that.

So tell me how many days and hours you worked.

When we started out, they didn't have automatic balers even. You had to keep a man on the baler to tie the wires around the bales.

So how did you do all that?

Well, you had a machine that'd bring the bales in and compress 'em, and then you'd have to tie the wires. They didn't have automatic...

Was it just you and the boys and your brother? Four of you?

Uh-huh.

Now, describe to me a typical workday on the ranch. Did you work six days?

Always six days, and all the hours that we could get in.

How long was the season? Were you always getting ready for the next crop? Was it pretty constant?

Irrigating, and...Yes.

Describe one typical day of ranching, with the hay. Tell me when you got up and follow through 'til you went to bed.

Well, I was always an early riser. I'd try to have the boys up by daylight.

What time?

Well, between six and six-thirty. Oftentimes I'd have to threaten with throwing water on 'em. I'd pull the covers off and get 'em up. But they were good. They'd get up and we'd try to always be out in the field by eight o'clock.

How many boys when they were getting bigger? Two, three?

Three of 'em.

First you had breakfast?

Yes, we'd have breakfast by seven, and try to be out in the field by eight.

Describe some of the work. How did you divide the work, and how long did you work? How'd you have lunch?

Well, two of us would have to run the baler. And then two, we had a deal that would roll the bales up. We had a hay rack with a team of horses on it, and you'd go along and this gadget would pick up the bales and raise 'em up about this high.

When you say "this high," how many feet is that? Because on tape, they can't see your hand,

That's right. It'd raise 'em up maybe four or five feet. And then you had hay hooks and you'd pull the bale over and stack 'em on the hay rack. And when you got a load of hay, why then you'd bring em in and you had to handle all of 'em by hand and stack 'em in a stack. So it was a lot of work. Usually the baler and the two men could keep the hay rack and that crew going.

Oh, my! And when did you take your break?

Well [chuckles], when we'd come in for dinner.

Would the noon meal be called dinner?

Yes.

And what time would that be?

Oh, usually between twelve and one-thirty.

What were some of your favorite dinners?

Well, I'll have to say the wife's always made favorite dinners, because we were real hungry [chuckles], and so whatever food there was tasted good.

She'll tell me more about that. And then did you go right back out again, working?

Usually. Well, I'd try to give the boys a half-hour. And a lot of times, they'd be tired enough that even they'd rather sleep than eat.

Oh really?! But they had to eat to get the energy.

Yeah, had to eat. So sometimes they'd just grab something after they'd wake up and we'd go back. You have to be—with youngsters growing up, you have to have a pattern and follow it.

Right, it helps them when they're out in the world.

That's right.

Now, what did you have to do with the cattle? Did you have to do much with the cattle? How many head did you have by then?

We had two hundred and forty-five or fifty head by then. Yes, we had to do quite a

lot with the cattle. We'd bring 'em in, and we'd have to brand 'em.

Where was their range? Where did they go?

Right across the valley, where I went up and looked at the cattle in the beginning.

And where was the branding done?

Usually right here in the corrals.

Do you have something that shows your brand, so we can add it to the interview? Do you have your brand anywhere?

Yes.

Be sure you give me something to show that.

Well, during that time, it was quite unusual, the Schmidtleins had the oldest brand in the State of Nevada. It was the "Bar S" on the right hip. And anyway, through some mistake, the Brand Agency in Reno gave our brand to some people in Eureka, Nevada. I don't know how it came about. And they apologized. They said, "We're real sorry it's happened, but we've already registered his." So anyhow, they came out and they said, "The only way we can settle this is to flip a quarter and see who keeps the original brand and [who] takes another one." And so we did and I lost. So they said, "Well, how about giving you the "Bar S" on the ribs instead of on the hip?"

Are you saying "Bar S"?

A bar atop of the "S," that's our brand. [S]

What does the "S" stand for? The Schmidtleins had the "S"?

Yeah, so they had the "S," so we kept that. But we had to change it from the hip to the ribs.

I see. And then what do you do, have the brand made? Who makes these brands?

The last few years, we have electric brand.

Oh, is that right?

Yeah, and they make it whatever way you want, electric brand. And you plug it into a little motor, and you don't have to make sagebrush fires, and the old original brands.

Oh, you'll have to show me that so I can take a picture of it, because people who aren't ranchers don't know any of this.

That's true. My son was branding up Birch Crick...

Which son?

Lavar, the oldest son, that's bought a ranch up by Boise, now. And over a holiday, some people came in from California [chuckles] and stole all his brands! Well, I think they just took them as relics.

Where were they? Where were the brands?

Well, he left it right up there where he'd been branding his calves.

And they just thought it was...

Yeah, and he had more calves to brand, and he just left them there by the fires. And so they came in, and when he went back he didn't have any brands.

Oh my! So you taught your boys to do the branding?

Yes. They'd do the branding and the castrating and the marking of the ears.

You taught them all that?

Uh-huh.

Now what did you do with your cattle? Did you sell them for beef?

We'd sell the calves off the cows, after we wean them in the fall. Now, see, the cattle would be up on the mountain, and we'd bring em down, and we'd wean the calves off of 'em, and usually sold them right off the cows.

Did they have the calves up in the mountains?

Well, they'd have the calves in the spring of the year or the winter. We tried to regulate our cattle so we got our calves in February and March.

Did you also—the way you did with the hay—did you communicate with cattle buyers so they knew to come?

Yes.

And where are most of the buyers from?

Oh, they were from all over. We sold some to this man I mentioned in Pioche, Delmeu. And they'd come from Fallon and different places. Elko used to have two or three cattle buyers.

Would you let them know when you had them?

Yes.

By mail or phone?

Usually by mail.

*Do you have a copy of any of those letters?
Something that shows how you communicated?*

We should have kept copies of those things.

Maybe you'll find something. So they would come here with trucks?

They'd come first and look 'em over and we'd decide on a price.

Decide who gave the better price.

Uh-huh.

How did you determine it? Is there an organization of ranchers so that you all know? Are the prices similar?

Well, we would find out...Now, for a long time, in California, they gave a daily cattle price.

I see, like a stock market.

Uh-huh, stock market is what it was. And we'd get in touch with them one way or another and pretty well find out what the calves were worth. We could talk intelligent when we came.

Did your cattle increase over the years?

Yes. We kept so many heifer calves. You have to do that anyway, because you have old cows that lose their teeth, or you have so many of them die, or one thing and another.

What do you do with the older ones? Do you cut them for beef?

We just sell 'em. They'd go to the market, most of them to California market, and they'd slaughter them out there.

Did you slaughter your own for your own families?

No, all that we've ever slaughtered is just for our own use here.

Who did that?

Darrel studied that in school.

Oh! Darrel's your second son?

Yes. And cutting them up and everything.

What kind of school? Where d he go?

He went to BYU, but they had that kind of a course for him.

Isn't that intelligent?!

And also, he's kind of our veterinarian. The professor up there told me, "Darrel is one of the best students I got in testing cows for calves and one thing and another." So Darrel is the one that runs the cattle here on the ranch.

Oh, he runs the cattle, he's the vet, he does the branding.

Everything.

So has he taken that over?

He's taken that over, but the rest of the boys—he can't do it alone, when they brand and that, so all of us go and help.

How many boys are here working on the ranch now?

Three boys.

And then one went up to...

He's in Kentucky. Well, he married an eastern girl. I told his mother, "He won't stay on the ranch, she'll want him back East." They came here for two years, but now *she* wants to come back. She said, "That was a mistake, we ever left." But he's doing real well. He's in the roofing business. And he's doing real well. But they call us real often.

Now I want to turn to other aspects of your family life. Did you ever leave the ranch to go into Austin? Did you do that very much?

No, we never did. We stayed here on the ranch because they run a bus from here into Austin for the students.

I see, for the school. So you didn't have to transport them?

No.

Now, I know that Nelda's going to tell me more about the Church, but is your family active in the Mormon Church?

Yes.

Was the church here when you came?

No, as I mentioned, just one family was here.

When the church developed, how often would your family go into Austin?

On Sundays.

Just once a week?

Uh-huh, just once a week.

When did that start, when you started to go into Austin once a week?

Oh, after the family was out here in 1954, started then.

Before they had a church, where did they meet for services? In homes?

Yes, we first met, the family that was LDS (Latter-day Saints, Mormons) was the forest ranger in Austin.

Oh, how interesting!

And so we met in his home for, oh, prit near two years. And then we were able to *rent* a vacated home where the church now stands.

I see. Now, I want to know what was Austin like in the fifties.

It was pretty...I shouldn't say "dead," maybe, but [chuckles] there wasn't much there, I'll tell ya'.

Not much more than now?

Oh, less.

Less *than now*?!

Even less.

Did you go in there to buy anything in Austin?

Yes, Vigus had a store in there, and we went in. Pretty efficient little grocery store there. And we used to buy a lot from them.

Buy supplies there?

Uh-huh.

Was it something like Kent's?

Yes, very much like that.

What else was there? Was there any place to buy medical, toiletries, things like that?

Hardware? No. Well, Lilian Gandolfo finally started a little place there, and she had different dry goods. But no, there wasn't much of anything there. I might mention, one time I had a \$150 check I wanted cashed, and I went into Vigus's and I said, "I need this check cashed," and he said, "All I can give you is silver dollars."

[laughs] That's when silver was really going strong.

Yeah, so he gave me a hundred and fifty silver dollars.

That's pretty heavy to carry.

Yeah. I had it in three little bags.

Isn't that interesting to hear. Now, where did you get your clothing and shoes and warm jackets—where did you get those things?

Pretty well when we went back to Utah.

How often would you go back?

Or to go to Fallon. Well, we still had connections over on the other ranch and we'd go there every two to three months.

Oh, and you could do shopping there?

Uh-huh.

What did you go into Fallon for?

Well, we started to do shopping there too. There was a Safeway store there.

You could stock up on supplies? Now, did you have a garden for your fresh vegetables and fruit here on the ranch?

Always have had a garden. That's one thing that I pretty well insisted on with the boys, and *they* all have gardens.

Did you have milking' cows for your dairy?

Yeah.

Chickens?

Chickens.

Uh-huh, so you had your eggs.

Pigs. Yeah, and we used to butcher our own.

So, pretty self-sufficient?

Uh-huh. Well, we live so far out here that...

Now when did plumbing come into being?

Well, out here, after we got the water piped down here, that's when we started to put in plumbing.

When did you move into this house? Was this a house you built?

No. No.

What house is this?

This was the house that my brother, when he retired—my older brother, Rigby—when he retired and his wife had been dead for 20 years...

Where had they been living?

In Salt Lake in an apartment.

They stayed in Salt Lake all the time?

When he said, "How 'bout moving out there?" and he got interested with Ted in prospecting, and he was long in years, so he and his wife *bought* this trailer.

Oh, this was a trailer?

Yeah, this was a trailer.

Oh, I didn't know that. They bought this back there?

They bought this in Salt Lake and moved it out here.

Oh, they moved here on the ranch! What year was that? About when was that? That's before Ted died.

Yes.

Uh-huh. Was that in the sixties?

He's been gone twenty years so that was along in 1965.

So your family here was expanding.

And he bought this and moved it here. Nelda and I went on a mission at that time.

Oh! Where did you go?

To Tampa, Florida.

For how long?

For eighteen months.

Now, how did they get along without you? [chuckles] Both of you?

Well they did just fine.

How'd they do? Who took over Nelda's role and your role?

They'd call up and tell us that things were going good.

But who took over Nelda's role?

Well, the daughter-in-laws here.

By then your sons were married?

Yeah, the sons were married.

What year was that when you went?

We've been back four years.

Oh, that's not very long ago. But we're into it already, so by then your sons were pretty much running things?

Yes, uh-huh. They'd come back and...

How did you enjoy that experience?

It was great.

It is such a totally different—where in Florida?

Greatest times of our life. Well, we went all over Florida.

Was it a traveling mission, you mean, around the state?

Well, pretty much. We were stationed in Arcadia, Florida. That's a little town right in the center of Florida. One of the older towns in all of Florida. Because they had a struggling branch there, they stationed us right there.

So you got away from the hard work for a while to do something with your mind.

Well, it was interesting. It was really a great time of our lives.

Did you get to come back to visit, or were you away the whole eighteen months?

We was away the whole eighteen months. No, you don't get to visit.

You don't get to go. Did you get homesick for the ranch and the kids?

No, but they wanted us to stay longer and I said, "You'll have to talk to my wife," and she said, "Oh, I'm homesick for the grandchildren," and I said, "Well, that's your answer I guess. We won't stay longer."

Now we're going to move back in years somewhat. I know you went into town once

a week to church. Were there other Mormon activities that your family were involved in as you settled in the area? Are there, in between Sundays, any Mormon activities?

Well, yes. I don't know whether you're acquainted with the Relief Society organization. Nelda was Relief Society President for some time. There was such a few of us that we had to fill all of the offices that the Church required. I mean, some of us took dual jobs and that, but for so many years there was just such a few of us.

How did the Mormon population grow here?

Well, through children growing up from LDS families.

Starting their families.

Uh-huh. And the last few years they've been quite an influx from the mines who are LDS people.

Oh, and then they stayed?

Well, they were working at the mines, yes.

Oh, the rejuvenated mines in the Battle Mountain area? the gold mining? Are there some near Austin?

Yes, yes, there's people here that are working at the mines, quite a few of them.

Now do you know what mines those are or what location?

Well, there's two mines, one way up the head of Grass Valley and then, golly...

Are these gold mines?

Yes, they're all gold mines.

I'll be able to get that information. Oh, that's good. So some of them came as Mormons and then settled in the community. That's interesting.

And their membership records were sent here to our branch.

Oh, how nice. Where did your sons find their wives? I'm sure they're Mormons.

Well, oh yes, yes. The daughter-in-laws are like our own children, our own daughters.

Isn't that wonderful.

Well, most of them found them in college.

Uh-huh, just like you did.

Yes, just like I did.

Because Brigham Young would be mostly Mormons, right? Or all Mormons?

Well, no not all, but mostly.

But most. That's a good way.

They found them. Ralph's wife was from California and Paul's wife is from Idaho. We kinda knew her folks when we lived in Idaho Falls. Darrell's wife is from Fallon so—just girls mostly in school.

Okay. That's a good way.

And they're working out real well. What they do, and I admire them for it. They take each other's children whenever one gets an injury or has a baby or anything. They take each other's children just like their own.

Growing as one great big family.

Yeah, that's true, that's true.

That's wonderful.

And it is wonderful for daughter-in-laws to feel that way and be so unselfish.

Well, I'm sure your sons picked them for that reason, right?

Well, I'm sure they did too.

Yeah, seeing the example of their parents.

Well, whatever, however. [chuckles]

Now let's go back to your ranch, I see some beautiful trees and lots of greenery. Tell me what you planted from the time you came until now that makes your ranch look so green and beautiful.

The only trees that were here—they had seven huge cottonwood trees down there where you saw the one that's just been cut.

Uh-huh.

In fact, two of them were leanin' right over the big house and I was afraid they'd fall on it. So anyhow, I took it on myself to pull these huge cottonwood trees over and get rid of them. Through the Soil Conservation, they came out with these olive trees, two kinds, and the ranch here didn't have any trees other than those huge ones I just mentioned.

So no shade?

No, but they did have plum trees and apple trees. They had planted quite an orchard here.

We've added to it, but this Soil Conservation said, "Wouldn't you like starts of olive trees out there?" and I said, "Yeah, we sure would." And so through them, at a real small price, why, I bought, I think, five dozen.

I have a couple questions that I want to ask. First of all, I didn't know olive trees could grow here. We have them in California. I didn't know they could tolerate cold, cold weather. Aren't they a more tropical tree?

They seem to do real well here.

Now when you said Soil Conservation, is it because they don't need a lot of water, or why are they good?

Well, they are just a real hardy tree.

A hardy tree? Do they produce olives?

No, no, they blossom, the olive blossom. We've had people come and say, "What is that wonderful smell?"

And they are very attractive. And have you added other trees?

My father, I don't know where he had the idea, but he taught all of us to try to plant a tree a year of our life.

Oh, how wonderful.

He said, "That will help the environment."

So he taught you about caring.

So, I've pretty well done that. Planted a tree a year through my life.

Now you were telling me that your brother had a mobile home. Let's bring that forward. How long was it a trailer? When did you finally take over? I'm sure a lot of work was done?

We'd been called on our mission, and just before we left, about a week, he passed away.

Oh, and that's just what, four years ago?

Uh-huh.

And he was living alone in the mobile home?

No, he had a wife.

Oh, his wife was still living. I see.

And they were very happy here and he was retired and doing what he wished. He was drilling down here to see what he would find. And on the way back up here to come to dinner, why, I guess he got tired and laid over in his Jeep.

Oh, and just died there?!

Yeah. One of the boys that was coming up from down below saw him and went over and thought he was just asleep. And he had passed away.

So it was peaceful. So now, what did his wife do?

She has Sons that are in the turquoise business down in Texas.

Oh.

So she went down there with them.

And so then is that when you took over and developed this into your home?

That's when I said to my son, Ralph, "Why don't you buy their trailer, and when we come back from our mission we'll live in it."

So did you do a lot of work or was it like this?

No, it was like this pretty well. We brought the furniture and that in here.

Beautiful. And then who took over the house where you were living?

Well, that's when we decided to remodel it and we got two different contractors to come and look at it and they said, "The foundation isn't worth remodeling." It's so shaky, I mean not made of good material. So then we decided to tear it down. And this son, that was here, he's starting to build on it.

Oh, for his family.

Uh-huh, he is going to build a home.

Now, do they know how to build houses, your sons? Or do they hire a contractor, or what do they do to build a house here?

Well, he's consulted with different people that have built a lot of houses. Oh, I imagine he'll contract part of it.

Yes. So that means your sons, of course, are going to settle here permanently.

Yes. Well, I've turned the place over, the management of it, and eventually, why, they'll just take it over.

Main responsibility. Have you been able to ease up a little bit on your work?

They're very good to me. I just do what I feel like.

Oh good.

I try to help them out what I can, but they say, "Dad, when you get tired or whatever, why don't keep going."

Because they're strong and young.

They couldn't be better to us and the daughter-in-laws are that way with their mother too.

So, I want to stay with that subject a little bit. What do you do with the time that you would have been working that you can relax a little more; what are the things you like to do or not do? I mean, how do you spend your time now?

I love to read. I do a lot of reading.

And you never had much time.

No, I haven't had in the past.

Tell me the kinds of things you enjoy reading.

Well, a number of things. I read a lot in the Book of Mormon and the Bible and in books like these down here, wildlife books. But when in the busy season, like now, why I try to help 'em. See, I worked nine hours yesterday raking hay for them.

Oh my. You're strong and...

When they're really rushed I try to help out.

You like nature books and history and things like that?

Very much.

That's very good. Do you and Nelda do anything together?

Lots of things.

I mean, do you take pretty drives or walks or things like that to enjoy this beautiful country?

Yes, we go a lot to visit. I still have three sisters alive, three younger sisters.

Where do they live?

One in Washington and two up at Bear Lake. We go and visit a lot.

Oh good, so you take a trip.

We have daughters in the different cities, up in Salt Lake and Las Vegas.

Do you stay at motels or do you camp?

They insist on us staying *with* them.

No, I mean during your travel when you have to stay overnight.

Yes, motels.

So you are taking it a little easier. That's nice.

I said to Nelda, "Do we need to get a camper?" And she said, "No, I don't want a camper." She says, "We'll just stay at a motel."

Good, oh good. I bet you like that too.

Well, you don't have a lot of responsibility that way.

That's right, a little bit of freedom. So that's kind of fun—enjoy the scenery and...

Right.

Do you feel guilty? Some of us, when you work real hard and then when you're not working you begin to feel a little...

No, I leave the ranch here and just go out. We enjoy life very much. Each day is more enjoyable to us as we get older and are here and the day passed.

See all the children and grandchildren you've produced?

Love the grandchildren. They come here. She gives them a candy quiz and I give them licorice. I keep licorice for them.

Oh. Now what kind of questions do you ask them?

Well, "Have you minded what your mom and dad wanted you to today? Have you been good children? Have you cried, or this or that?" I usually ask them some things...

Well, they're so lucky growing up with such wonderful grandparents who have set the tone for the whole family, and to grow up in a community of loving families, don't you think?

That's true, that's true.

Now I'm going to move you back in years again, because we talked about a lot of the ranching,

but what do you do when you have a real bad winter or real bad storms? What do you do during that period?

Well, in the past when we have had bad storms, and a lot of snow sometimes we had to go gather the cattle and bring them in and feed them hay for a while because the snow covers up the vegetation and they have to have extra feed.

Have you lost any cattle because of any storms?

Oh, back over the years, yes. We've had real heavy storms a few times, oh maybe, two, three years. The cattle that we didn't get in—this is a big country, you know—and the cattle we didn't get in, a lot of times they'd starve.

Did you expand the acreage of your ranch in this region from the time when you first bought it?

Yes, yes. We had 860 acres, and now we have 1,200 acres here on this ranch, and we have a deal pending up on the Birch Creek Ranch, buying that one also.

So your sons will take care of that?

That's where Ralph as living.

Oh, he's living there. How far is that from here?

Six miles.

Okay. Did I pass it? or is it the other direction?

Yes, you passed it. You saw sprinklers running up there?

Oh yes.

Well that's it. And then there's considerable range up there *with* that ranch. We'll to be able to expand our cattle herd.

Oh, so he'll live in that house?

Yes.

And then the house being built here, your other son will build?

Right.

So those two sons will stay here with their families?

Well, yes.

In this area What's going to happen to all those mobile homes? The ones they live in now. Will you sell those?

Sell 'em. Or for hired help or whatever.

So it's going really well. Is there something that I haven't known to ask you that you can tell us about this area that will add more light to the history?

Schmidtlein, the father of the boys we bought from, lived during the time of the silver boom in Austin.

Do you know what year that was, about?

Well it was around 1860-1865. And he supplied them with meat in there, as much meat as he could get a hold of.

Now was that the grandfather of the people who lived next to you, if this was the 1860s?

That was the father of these boys we bought from here on this ranch. I should say

men we bought from. And see they were up around sixty-five, the men we bought from, seventy. He had two mules here and there used to be a lot of prospectors come up and down the valley here.

Oh, to go to the silver mines?

Yes, go to the silver mines. And so they'd stop in and they'd say, "We understand you grubstake prospectors here."

Tell us what grubstake means.

Well, that means you'll furnish the food and the mules and we'll put the saddles on them and we'll go up and prospect here in these canyons.

And then they'd give them money back if they find silver?

Yes. Well, or gold—whichever. So this one prospector came in and he was just leaving for Austin with his meat and he had a great big rock on one of the mules. They used to have a corral right down here in front of the old house—and Schmidtlein said, "I haven't time to look at it or talk to you now, just throw the rock down there," and so he did. He said, "I think it's pretty rich." So anyway, the rock sat there for two months and another prospector came through and he sat down on the rock and he had his little pickax and he was picking into the rock and he says, "My gosh, Schmidtlein, whered' you get this rock?" He said, "This is really rich!" And Schmidtlein said, "Well a prospector brought it in. And the boys tell me that that prospector was only gone overnight. He left in the afternoon and he came back the next afternoon, right up here out of one of these canyons." Well, anyhow, this other prospector said, "You better get this

in and grind it up." It brought 'em \$4,000, that one rock.

Oh my, now who was it that got the \$4,000?

Well, that was his sons. They built this house down here, that was the starting of the...

Is that right? Where did they have the stone ground? Do you know where that was?

Down in Searchlight. They had a mill down there and they ground it up.

Was it gold or silver?

It was gold. It was real rich.

It was gold! Isn't that amazing!

So anyway, that was the story that these boys always told.

So the road probably was just a dirt and gravel road then?

Yes, just a dirt and gravel road. There was four men from Ely, Nevada up here mining silver, and they were following a pretty good vein of silver and when the one fellow came—they used to come down here to the ranch for food and grubstake and that...

To the Schmidtlein ranch or your ranch?

The Schmidtlein ranch. They came down here, and one brother had a letter here from his brother in Ely and he said, "Oh forget what you're doin' out there and come to Ely," he said, "we've really hit it rich." That was Kennecott Copper. "We've hit a lot of copper over here and it looks good." And so they

debated here whether to go back up to the mine, because it's real steep, it took them all day to come down. It was clear up on this mountain, two-thirds of the way up. They debated and finally they flipped a quarter and decided to go to Ely, all of them. So when we came here they told me about the mine so I went up there. All their tools, wheelbarrows and everything there, just like they'd left it.

Oh my gosh!

Because they expected to go back.

Did anyone ever mine that?

No, no.

What is the name of that mountain? Does it have a name?

Toiyabe Mountains. That's the only one. So, as I say, everything was there. They even had dynamite there and I went down.

Did your brother try to mine?

No, it was so high up and that's when silver prices, silver went way down. Some other fellows came in and took some claims but silver was so low they let them go. This was the Schmidtlein Ranch. They're the ones that sold it to me.

Now when did those men die, or leave?

All of the brothers that were here, one of them was deputy sheriff in Austin and some Indians come in and bought gas and didn't pay for it and took off towards Eureka and he chasm' 'em, and they turned on a dirt road and he was going too fast to make the turn and his

car tipped over and killed him. So that's one of them.

Oh, oh dear.

But the rest of 'em were a little older than I and they've all passed on.

Was the road out front just dirt or gravel?

Right.

When did they finally pave it?

Well they made prit near a *new* road down below,

Oh tell us about that. In other words, it's a different road?

It's a different road entirely than the old original road.

Describe that. Okay, tell us about it.

The old original road had bridges across all these canyons where the water run down.

What were the bridges made of?

Timber. Yeah, made out of—I assume that it was timber from these very mountains here.

And strong enough for the cars to come over?

Yes, yes. It would hold a load of ore pulled by horses or mules or whatever.

And that's what it was like when you came?

Uh-huh.

And when did they make the new road?

Well I shouldn't say "When we came"—the new road was made *before* we came. Now I knew a contractor in Provo, a Mr. Palfreyman. He was telling me that when he got the bid on this road and came out here to build it, he said they had so much water coming out of all these canyons, he said, "I put in more culverts than I've ever put it in any contract I've had."

Is that right?

He said water was just everywhere up here. And we've had years like that here. And so that was interesting to me. What I started out to say was after I got out of high school my friend and I went to California and worked on a ranch down there during the winter.

What part of California?

Oceanside.

Oh yeah, near where I live!

Oh really? We worked on the Monserate Ranch, you may have heard of it.

Oh I know, I know the history of that.

Oh do you?

Yes.

Well, I've worked there a lot: cultivated peas and what not. Well, anyhow, they had a fire down there in all their oak parks and they come and gathered all of us up and we had to go fight fire for three weeks.

Oh for goodness sake. Oh my.

This friend of mine and myself got on a truck, on one of their fire trucks, and we'd go.

You know that oak is unusual—it'd start clear out the end of a limb and then go in and just burn the whole tree.

Oh my.

Just gradually eat in 'til the...And we'd park by some of those trees at night because it was a little cool and we'd sleep on the truck. Anyhow we fought fire there for two weeks. What I was going to tell you about was we had gone down out of Utah on Highway 91 to get to California and we decided we wanted to see new country on our way back to Idaho and so we came on *this* highway.

Really?!

When we got about right here, why we were kind of lost, we didn't know where to—we didn't have any map and we didn't know *where* we were so this Schmidlein, Frank Schmidlein, was down here at the bottom of the field trying to turn the water and we stopped here and a lot of snow on the mountains and that, and I said, "Gee, this is beautiful country," and he said, "Yeah, it's sure got a lot of water." Anyhow it impressed me some way, that eventually maybe I might come back here. I don't know why I felt that way. So he give us instructions how to get back up to Utah and Idaho. Told us we could go over through Eureka or we could go up this other way.

How old were you then?

I was nineteen and my friend was eighteen.

Do you think that that little bit of an experience had something to do with your later coming and wanting to buy the ranch?

Yeah, I do. Not only that, but what this contractor told me about all the water that was out here—those two things.

That's right, yeah.

I always had in the back of my head this waterwheel deal. This waterwheel—wouldn't it be great to get somewhere where you could have the water make your power? So when I came over here to buy these cattle, I said to myself, "Hey, I've been through here."

Oh you did. You remembered that.

I've been right here to this ranch. We stopped, I guess we talked to Frank Schmidlein down here for a half-hour or so.

Oh my, isn't that something?

And so all that came back to me.

And it seems like all those decisions you made were definitely the right ones.

Well, I sometimes wonder about 'em! You know. I had money enough if I hadn't have invested here in the ranch, to really have lived nice in the city. But I don't think we'd have had the kind of boys and girls we've got.

That's right.

We've had to struggle out here and if you don't struggle, you don't grow.

That's true. Now is there anything else that you want to tell us about your life here before we end the interview?

Well, there's been a lot of things take place like down here at Round Mountain—see

this is the fifth company that's owned Round Mountain since we've been here.

Tell me what Round Mountain is.

Well, that a gold, that's where they're finding all this gold.

Okay, it's Round Mountain? And where is it in reference to your ranch?

It's fifty miles south here. Two of these companies came in—they was either going to have to pay the government a lot of taxes or spend it on this down here.

Spend it on what?

Well, on equipment and on a mining mill and on developing the mine at Round Mountain. So these different companies have come in and taken it over. I guess the reason I'm familiar down there is, we had a friend that worked there and we'd go down quite a lot. When these different mines would sell out or try to sell out they had a lot of equipment down there and we'd go and get some of the equipment and bring up here.

Did they bring new people in when they were starting?

Yes, they'd always bring new people.

Now where do these people live that come in to work there?

Most of them right there at Round Mountain. They've developed another town down in the valley there.

Oh, I see.

Since we've been here they bought a farm down there and they got a regular city there.

You mean the people...

Well, the mine has.

Have the people that you know that have come, have some settled here?

Oh yes, a lot of them. Yeah, they got quite a town down there. Another thing, I was offered some property there real cheap, fifty dollars an acre. And now it's...because of the mine that's in there and that. But that's all past.

So there is some revived activity. Now what changes have you seen in the town of Austin itself over the years? Because you said it was even smaller when you first came.

Well, less people and the churches—practically all of them have died there—other than the Mormon Church.

Uh-huh. How many members in the Mormon Church?

Oh, average of around sixty-five to seventy.

Oh, that's a lot.

For a little town.

For a little, little town like that. Where do you buy your supplies and clothing and shoes and all the children's things?

Mostly in Fallon. But groceries now at Round Mountain are even better than in Fallon.

Really?! I'll have to get over there:

Oh yeah. They got a lot of people down there and they supply their people and the prices are better, according to the daughter-in-laws, the prices are better than...

Oh, and anyone can shop there?

Anyone can shop there. They have a swimming pool and a nice high school there.

Oh really?! I hadn't heard about it.

Oh yeah, they've made *lots* of money there. They've hit gold pockets there that are just tremendous.

Is that still in Lander County?

No, that's in Nye County. They hit one, oh maybe a quarter of an acre, hot pocket here just a year ago. Well, they've hit two of 'em, but this one, they hauled it up there and you could look at the rocks and see the nuggets right in the rocks.

Really, oh my! And you say it's about fifty miles down on the same highway?

Uh-huh. Well, anyhow they hauled that gold up there in a pile and they put guards around it and the darn guards were...

Stealing?! Oh! [laughs]

Yeah! So then they built a great big fence around it—and see, they can handle only fine gold down there—they're only equipped to handle the powdered and fine gold.

Oh, are they doing it with that new chemical process?

Uh-huh, that's what they do it with. Spray it and it runs down. Well, these were all nuggets, see, and so they had to get a new mill out of Salt Lake, which cost them a million dollars and their geologist—I know him real well down there—he said, “We got twelve million dollars out of that pile of rock.”

You're kidding!

No, I'm not kiddin'. And he said, “We got thirteen [million]. We paid for the mill and got twelve million clear.”

Oh, I hadn't heard anything about that 'til you told me.

Oh yeah, they're getting really rich with it. And see, from North Umberland, which is right over across here, that's another mine, this geologist that we knew here real well, he said they got gold like that clear right on down to Round Mountain, which is another thirty miles over in those mountains.

So there is still gold...

Oh yes.

I know Battle Mountain has a lot of new mines—ten, I think.

The state here has got a lot of gold that hasn't even been touched yet. It's rich right up along *this* mountain.

Oh my! It seems as someone who comes from a really suffering economy in California, that in Nevada there's a lot of opportunities for people who want to work in things like the mining and the ranching and the construction—a lot of road work going on throughout the whole state.

A lot, a lot. Well, we're happy to be over here. Nevada's been good to us.

Well, and you've contributed so much to Nevada.

Well, yes we have. We've built up a lot here and spent considerable money over the years in development.

That's right, you've added to it. Now what do you see as the future for you and Nelda? Are you going to stay on the ranch in this place and enjoy a less physical life with some travel and relaxation near the children?

I think so. I think so. We're free to go and come and enjoy all of the grandchildren and that's what we kind of anticipated over the years and if we need any help of any kind, why we got someone we can call on. So we think that's as good a life as you can have.

Sounds good. I know you envision that there is more mining—what do you see this valley, Big Smoky Valley, the future in the next, let's say, ten years? What do you envision it to be like?

There was two geologists in here from Canada four years ago, and they said what's been found over on *this* mountain and what's been found up here at Kingston in gold, they figure there's two big dikes of gold that run underneath this valley.

Oh my!

Now that's just what—they were geologists that were here. And so this area could develop just like up at Elko or wherever. If people come in here and drill—well, for instance, he found

that big rock up there that I was telling you about, and so there's gold here too. But I told my brother, I said, "Well, I got a family and I know what I can raise on *top* of the ground. I don't know what's underneath the ground!" [laughter]

Which brother was that?

This was Ted.

Oh Ted, that was here. Of course I'm sure you envision that it will always stay a rich ranching area for your sons and families.

Well, sometimes they get discouraged and say these mines are paying \$16-\$18 an hour and have all the benefits and everything and we work sixteen to eighteen hours and have to furnish our own benefits, and sometimes you wonder whether I did the right thing—I mean to have ranching for them to come back to or not.

But the mines are up and down through the years and there's long years of unemployment, right?

That's right. That's what's happened.

And you don't own anything.

That's right. That's what they tell me, so I say, "Well, if you're happy here, why that's what counts."

Oh sure, and its the future for their children.

That's right, that's right. Well, that's about how we feel and I've seen a lot of development here since we've been here. I've ridden clear over on our summer range and rode for two days and never see anyone.

Where is the summer range?

Right across the valley, on the mountains over there.

On the mountains?

Uh-huh, the mountains across the valley.

I see, so the cattle go on the mountains? They climb up on them?

Uh-huh, in the summer time. And there's adequate water up there and the springs and that.

I saw driving, just not too far down the road, maybe near where your son is going to be, where they started a little development selling acreage for little mobile homes or houses. What is that about?

That's right here at Kingston, and a promoter from California came in.

Is that Kingston?

No, that's Gillman. They call it Gillman. And this promoter from California came in—that's a whole 'nother story I could tell you.

He's breaking up the ranch into little places for houses?

Well, yeah, just little places. He's in it for what he can get out of it.

It didn't seem to fit.

That place, and the Kingston Ranch and this ranch all belonged to the one Schmidtlein family.

Is that right?! And they just sold it to different people?

Yeah.

Who's moving into those little places that he's selling?

Miners that work at the mines and two of 'em run trucks for us. See, we run four trucks.

Oh, they work for you?

Yes. We run Young Brothers Trucking. We run trucks along with our ranch.

Oh that's a whole new activity you have to tell me about. Tell me when that started and develop it for us.

Well, as I mentioned, when I first started raising hay here, I had no way of getting my hay to California and so I'd hire trucks or truckers that were from California to haul the hay down to the dairies. I'd contact the dairies. So as we got more hay, why, I needed more trucks. On a number of the trucks I'd never hear from them again! I mean, they would take a load of hay and I'd try to catch up with them and that cost me more than the hay was worth. So anyway, we decided we had to get our own trucks.

What year is this? Approximately how long ago?

We've had trucks here now for, let's see, ten years.

Where'd you buy the trucks?

Oh, we started out buying used trucks from different truckers, different people: one from over in Eureka and one out of California.

But the last five years we've decided that used trucks weren't the way to go—that you could buy new trucks, they guarantee anything goes wrong within 500,000 miles, why they'll fix it free. And so we sold these used trucks and been gradually—we bought four new trucks this last three years.

So this is very recent?

Yes.

So where do you get the truckers?

Well, that's one of the problems. The boys drove trucks for a while and neglected the ranch here, and I said, "You've got to find truckers." So they got one fellow and then he got his brother from over in Denver, real fine fellows.

Now where'd the first fella come from? You said you got one fella and he got his brother.

He came from Fallon.

Did you advertise?

No, no. We got Milton Lott over here—has been in the trucking business years ago—and we got him on a percentage *in* the trucking business with us, and he had contacts. So now instead of just hauling hay we haul everything.

You mean they can hire you as a hauler?

Yes.

So if they have cattle or if they have potatoes, or what else?

Whatever they have. Hardware and that we haul to Winnemucca. We haul hardwood

lumber up into Oregon and Washington from California. Well, he told me the other day, he said, "If we had ten trucks instead of four we'd just keep 'em all..."

Is this Milton that's telling you this?

Yes. He hires the jobs, he gets the jobs.

So you're in it as an investor?

We pay him a percentage.

And then you do your own hay with those trucks.

Yes, we haul our hay to California.

So is this all your brilliant mind figuring out all this?

Well, it comes along kinda gradually.

But you thought of it?

Yes.

That's really amazing.

I said, "We got to haul our own hay to California" and that's how it started out. But now see, instead of just hauling one way, we're hauling loads *both* ways.

That's very smart.

And we haul to all these min we haul different materials.

And is it called, did you say Young...

Young Brothers Trucking.

Do you have any business cards or anything with that on it? Finding things for the record.

Yes we have some. He has them over there. I'll show you a truck down here, one of the older trucks that's got the name on it.

And where does Mr. Lott live?

We helped him buy a place over here at Gillman.

Oh, he lives over there. One of those little places for sale. Does he have a family?

No, just he and his wife. They have one of the better places over there.

Where did he live before he came here?

Fallon. That's where we got acquainted with him.

See we almost missed that little story.

Yeah, well, they're real fine people and he's had this trucking experience. So anyway, it's working out real good with him.

Now I read that one of your sons—I don't know which one—majored in economics like you did? or business or...

Yeah.

Which son was that?

That was Brigham, the one that's in Kentucky.

Oh. So who handles all your records here, your business? Did he used to do that?

Yet

Because I read in an article that he did.

Yes he did.

So who does all the bookkeeping now?

Well, Milton Lott over here hires a woman up here from Kingston that comes in.

Does she work on a computer here and takes care of all the record keeping? That's an enormous job.

Uh-huh. It is.

I can just imagine.

Ralph was doing it—Ralph up on the Birch Creek Ranch. He took some economics and he was doing it, but it was too much for him. I mean, he says, "I don't get any other work done."

So now you have everything running smoothly, so that when you go away you don't have to worry.

The only problem we have, which is still a problem—oh, not right now it isn't—but that's getting truck drivers. Now we can get plenty of truck drivers with under one year's experience, but the insurance on them is so high that you can't afford to hire 'em.

Oh, it's not worth it. I see.

So you've got to get experienced truck drivers.

Has Milton advertised in California? We've got so many unemployed people!

No he hasn't. He's tried to get truck drivers that had a connection with somebody he knew. Because you know you're trusting them with a lot of money. These trucks run \$80,000-\$90,000,

Oh my! Do you get some tax benefits because you're investing money in your farm?

Yes, yes. We get a tax benefit from gas and diesel that we run on the farm and not out on the highway.

And also on the trucks and the equipment that you buy?

That stay on the farm, yes. Everything that stays on the farm we get a tax deduction.

So that's a nice encouragement to improve what you're doing.

Yes it is, yes it is. And that's good.

I just heard and read recently—in fact I was at a commissioner's meeting where they were announcing and publicized to the ranchers that there is now tax benefits if you apply and follow certain conservation methods in the grazing. Have you done that?

We're doing that.

Can you tell us about that? Is that new or has that been going on?

Yes, it's comparatively new. Now two years ago, up on our summer range over here, we spent \$4,500 in cash and put in a two-inch pipeline from one spring that had excess water, a mile-and-a-half over to another spring, and then the Forest [Service] came

along and shared with us in buying a solar system—it's on a trailer.

Is that because it's conservation methods?

Yes. We installed that solar system and it pumped the water from this one spring clear over to the other spring. That is definitely conservation because your livestock goes to a new area and you have water.

They said something about you register with them and they come and work with you?

The Forest Service, yes.

And they tell you what is included in conservation?

Yes, well they're definitely in conservation. See, where the springs run down these canyons in these different grazing areas, why they call them riparian areas and they'd like to have them fenced and keep the cattle right out of there because that's where if you don't...Last year we put a herder up with the cattle and they'd come in to water and then he'd drive them out because they stay right in where the water is.

So what do you do now?

We're still working with the Forest [Service].

And they help direct your...

Yes, they say, "We'd like the cattle moved from this area to a different area."

Do they then, by doing all that, does it help, do they tax you less, or not increase your taxes?

No, it doesn't. No, we pay a grazing fee, and that's the same, regardless.

But they're not going to raise it?

Well, we don't know, we don't know. That II come from the government.

Well I read if you follow the conservation, those that follow it won't have to increase the grazing. Did you hear that? Do the Forest Service people tell you anything like that?

Well, the Forest [Service] people have got people above 'em that dictate to *them*, and yes, they have gone all out with us because we've worked with them and spent money.

I heard Babbitt's talk where he was telling the ranchers that if they follow conservation methods, that'll keep the fees from rising.

Well, that's what we're doing.

Let's get back to what you were saying, another thing that you do in conservation.

Well, some of these cattle I bought from this ranch and took over to the other ranch. I was with Production Credit Association (PCA) in Salt Lake—they financed the cattle. And they wanted me to sell some cattle.

Why?

Well, they wanted to reduce the debt, and so they said, "We'd like you to sell a hundred and fifty head of your cattle," and I said, "Fineree." The cattle were over on the ranch, at the State Line Ranch—Nevada and Utah state line. So I heard about this man in California, wanted to buy some cattle. I called him and

he said, "Yes, I'm interested in a hundred and fifty head or whatever you have," and he came up.

What year was this? Or how long ago approximately?

This was in 1949. He came up and I took him out on the range and looked at the cattle. At the time he looked at 'em—that was in July—he said, "Yes, I like the looks of 'em, I'll buy 'em." We agreed on twenty-four cents a pound for 'em.

Is that how they usually sell the cattle—by pound?

Yeah, per pound. I said, "When do you want 'em delivered?" That was over in the next valley, he had a ranch. He said, "The first of October." I said, "Alright." He paid me \$10,000 down. It was all verbal, all verbal. He said, "I'll pay you \$10,000 down and pay you the balance when I get the cattle in October, the first of October." Between the time he bought the cattle and the first of October, they'd dropped from twenty-four cents down to *sixteen* cents a pound. The price had dropped that much. I sent the \$10,000 into the PCA in Salt Lake and I told 'em that he'd agreed to take the rest of the cattle. And they said, "Have you got a written contract?" and I said, "No, it's all verbal. The man gave me his word." Well they said, "He won't buy 'em." They said, "He's losin' \$35,000 on that deal and he won't take 'em."

And what happened?

I said, "Well, I like the man. He's seventy-two years old and I believe he will take 'em." I told them up there. And they said, "Well,

we'll see." So just before the first of October he called me and he said, "Are you ready to deliver the cattle?"

He paid the price?!

And I said, "Yes, I am." And I didn't say anything to him about the price...

And he didn't say anything?!

Well, until I'd delivered all the cattle. And I said, "Are they what you looked at?" And he said, "Finere, deal's just like we said." After he wrote out the check I said, "Do you realize how much you're losing on these cattle?" He said, "My boy, we made a deal didn't we?" I said, "Yes, we did." He said, "We shook hands on it." I said, "Yes, we did." "Well," he said, "that's all that matters."

Oh, would you find anyone, not very many, you know.

Very few. I've sold a lot of cattle to different individuals, just a few, and had 'em stay all day and question a half-a-cent. But anyway, he took 'em and he paid me the money and the people in Salt Lake were really surprised. I've always admired that man for—his word was good. And my dad always said, "If your word isn't good, you're no good."

See, so he knew you too.

Yes.

In other words, if the price had gone up, he probably knew that you wouldn't say, "Now it's thirty-five cents a pound."

No, no.

He knew.

No, he knew I'd deliver them no matter.

How many head of cattle do you have now?

We have four hundred head of mother cows. We have facilities to run five hundred head of mother cows. So, in order to get that number, why we keep quite a few heifer calves over.

And how many bulls do you need to keep to get the calves from these cows?

Well, we try to keep one bull per 25 head of cows. That's sixteen—we've got, I think, twenty bulls.

Do they just all roam and range together?

Yes. They run with the cows in the summertime. We are trying—the last two years we have upped our percentage of calf crop considerably.

Oh, calves. How many?

Well, this past year we got ninety-six percent—that's real high. The average cows out on the range get way down sixty percent. Well by raising oats, planting oats and putting these cows in to where they come back in flesh real fast after being out on the range, why then they conceive.

How many times a year do they have the calves?

Just once.

Just once? How many are usually born at one time?

It takes 'em nine months. Well, that depends—if the cattle are in good shape, we have them in a good pasture and adequate bulls, we might get sixty percent of them in a month.

Do they have more than one at birth? Sometimes have more?

Well, yeah, occasionally. Occasionally you have two.

Does your son have to sometimes monitor to help in any of the births where there is problems?

Yes, especially on heifers. That's another thing—there's certain breeds of cattle that will have smaller calves than other breeds.

Does he go and monitor at certain times when he thinks it's important?

Uh-huh. And we buy, we try to get the bulls that will have smaller calves for the heifers.

So there is a lot that goes into this!

Yes, there is. When I grew up you couldn't hardly sell any cattle that were cross-breds.

Tell us what that means.

Well, they go from Hereford to Angus to Charolais, Salers, Gelbvieh. There's ten different kinds of cattle. When I grew up, either when a buyer would come in, it had to be all Herefords, one color, or all Angus. But now that doesn't matter. You can have every color of the rainbow.

Why did it matter?

I think it was just habit, or I think the feed yards thought that a certain breed fed out better than mixed, and they found out they don't.

It doesn't matter.

No. We cross 'em now and so you can get all colors and kinds of cattle, which work out alright. The buyers never complain.

Is there anything else that we didn't cover?

Well, not really in this area

So on behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project I want to thank you so much for sharing your experiences and your life.

Well, you're sure welcome. You're pleasant to talk to.

This is the end of this interview.

JOSEPH CHESTER YOUNG
PHOTOGRAPHS



J. CHESTER YOUNG, JUNE 1993

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)

JOSEPH CHESTER YOUNG

ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

NELDA CALL YOUNG**PREFACE**

Nelda Call Young was born in the Mormon Colony in Colonia Dublan, Chihuahua, Mexico in 1921. Her maternal grandfather immigrated to the United States from Switzerland because of his religious belief as a Mormon. Her grandmother, born to an aristocratic family in Germany, also immigrated to the United States with her mother and family, who were Mormons, for religious freedom.

Grandfather Abegg was more than twenty years older than Grandmother Louisa Abegg, who was sixteen when they met and married in Utah. Nelda's parents, born in Utah, met in the Mormon Colony in Mexico where both families colonized. They married, and lived there the rest of their lives, her father serving as Bishop for twenty-three years then as Stake Patriarch.

Nelda, one of twelve children, lived there until she left to attend Brigham Young University where all of her brothers and sisters went, returning home summers until

she married. During her first year at BYU, Nelda met Chester Young and they married in 1941 in the Salt Lake City Mormon Temple. Nelda, Chester and his brother Ted leased a cattle ranch at Snake Valley, Nevada, on the border of Utah. Eight of their nine children were born there. Chester bought the cattle ranch in Smoky Valley, Nevada in 1950. At that time there was no Mormon church in the Smoky Valley area. Nelda and the children spent summers there, but went back to Delta where they could attend the Mormon church and continue their schooling. They moved permanently to Smoky Valley in 1959 when a Mormon church organization was planned. Nelda describes in detail the growth of the Mormon community and activities, and finally the building of the Mormon Church in Austin.

She describes her busy life on the ranch with a large family, and the pleasure of eventually having a sprinkler system enabling her to have a vegetable garden and later her beautiful flower gardens. Nelda's many contributions to the county included serving on the Lander County School Board.

Nelda expresses in words and emotion her love of the beautiful valley and the “sweet, peaceful experience” of her life in Smoky Valley.

INTERVIEW

Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Lander County Oral History Project, interviewing Nelda Young at her home at Smoky Valley, Austin, Nevada, June 19, 1993.

Good afternoon Nelda. It's such a pleasure to be here interviewing you today. Could you please tell us your full name?

Nelda Young: Nelda Call Young.

And where were you born?

I was born in the Mormon Colony in Colonia Dublan, Chihuahua, Mexico.

What was your birthdate?

July 4, 1921. You'd think I was an American! I was a firecracker. [laughs]

I was going to say, there was quite a celebration!

I am an American citizen, I had to take out my certificate of citizenship, because I was born in Mexico, making me a Mexican citizen, but I was an American, because of American parents. I should have declared my citizenship at age eighteen. This I did not do. I got my certificate of citizenship in 1985, but I've assumed American citizenship all my life. Now I have the legal document to prove it.

First we're going to start with your paternal grandparents. First tell me your grandfather's name. That's your father's father.

Anson Call.

And where was he born, do you know?

He was born in Fletcher, Vermont.

Do you know the date?

Yes, that was May 13, 1810.

Did you know him at all?

No.

He died before you were born?

Yes.

And now tell us about your paternal grandmother.

Anna Mariah Bowen Call was her name, and she was born January 3, 1834, in Bethany, New York.

Did you know her?

No.

Now tell me about your maternal grandfather, your mother's father.

He was born in Zurich, Switzerland and migrated to the United States.

What was his name?

Arnold Abegg.

When did he migrate here? How old was he?

I would have to check that.

Do you know what brought him to the United States?

No, I can't tell you that. He died when my mother was just ten years old.

What about your maternal grandmother? What was her name?

She has a long name. She went by Louisa, but it was Louisa Matilta Haag Abegg, and then she married a Done].

Now where was she born?

She was born in Stuttgart, Germany.

Do you know how your maternal grandparents met?

Well, it's really an interesting story. Of course both of them came here because they immigrated because of their religious beliefs, because they were LDS, or Mormons.

Were they sent over?

No, it was of their own free will. They came to Utah, and they met after Utah. My grandfather had never been married, but he was twenty-something years senior of my grandmother. My grandmother married as a young girl of sixteen, I think it was. She came from an aristocratic family in Germany, had everything her heart desired all the time she was growing up. They used to go to the Queen's parties at the palace. I mean they were that caliber.

Was her family Mormon?

They were converts.

It started in your great-grandparents' generation?

Yes.

Where did they meet in Utah-Salt Lake City?

No, in Payson, Utah.

They had come separately? Did they come alone, or with a group of people?

I don't know about my grandfather, but my grandmother came with her mother and some of the family.

Did they tell you anything about their meeting and their courtship and marriage?

[chuckles] Grandma has quite an interesting [story]. There were two men: both of them wanted her hand. Her mother was very wise. She said, "I don't want either one of you to come around until—let her make up her mind." I think it was for a month. "You can't see her." And the interesting thing was, my grandfather was thoughtful enough to write letters to her the whole time.

How smart!

And he won her hand! [chuckles]

Oh how beautiful! And that probably won her heart. [chuckles] Do you know how old they were when they married?

I would have to check that. Like I said, I think she was sixteen, and he was some twenty years older.

And that's your mother's parents?

Yes.

Do you know anything about your father's parents, their courtship or marriage?

No, I don't know too much about that, although they were pioneers here in Utah and Nevada. They came when the Church was newly organized. They came and joined the Church while it was still in the Kirtland and Nauvoo area, Illinois [Nauvoo] and Ohio [Kirtland].

When you said "joined the Church," they converted?

They were converted, yes. They were converted.

And they married as Mormons?

Yes, they were. And then they both made the trek from East to Salt Lake with the pioneers.

So then tell me a little bit about your father. First, what was his name?

My father's name was Anson Bowen Call.

And where was he born?

He was born in Bountiful, Utah.

And what was the date?

October 20, 1863.

And your mother's name?

Mother's name was Julia Sarah Abegg Call.

And where was she born?

She was born in Payson, Utah.

When was she born?

She was born September 30, 1885.

Did they tell you about their courtship and eventual marriage?

Well, they both were in families colonizing in Mexico, and it was there that they met.

Do you know where in Mexico?

It was in Colonia Dublan, the same place I was born.

How long did they go together before they married?

I really couldn't tell you.

But they married there?

Yes, they were married there.

Do you know how long they lived there?

Well, they both lived there 'til their death.

Oh, they did?

Yes. They left three different times at the time when Pancho Villa was there. A lot of interesting things. They left, but they returned.

I see. You were born there?

Yes.

And were there brothers and sisters?

Oh yes, all of them but one. My mother had twelve children, and Ola was the only one that was born in the United States one of the times when they left, during that time.

Oh, when they came back for a while.

When they were in exodus from there.

And where are you in the lineup of all these kids?

Hm, I'm close to the middle, if I remember. I know I have four younger than I.

I'm not going to ask too much about your life there, but first I want to find out how long did you live in Chihuahua?

I lived there permanently until I came away to the University. I came to BYU (Brigham Young University) and so I was living there. Then I returned home for summers after that. But until I was married, I lived there permanently.

Tell me just a little bit about your family life as a Mormon family in Chihuahua. Was there a large Mormon congregation?

Yes. I was raised almost *completely* surrounded by them. The only people that were Caucasian were LDS people, and the others were natives. There were very few of the natives at that time that had been converted. So I was raised *completely*, all of my entertainment, everything, was geared around the Church. Our home was a very God-fearing home, and my father was very gentle, very kind; my mother, very efficient, very loving and helpful to people. My father also.

Were they leaders in the Church?

Yes, my father was Bishop down there for twenty-three years, and then later after that he was put in as Stake Patriarch, so all his life. And my mother also held many important...

Did you all speak Spanish?

Not as much as maybe we should have, but yes. We had what we called "kitchen Spanish."

But you could get along?

Yes.

So how did you handle school there, or did you have your own Mormon schools?

Yes. Yes, it was private Church schools.

And you studied in English?

Yes, completely. And until the time, there was a period of time when the Mexican government said, "You *cannot* teach United States history, unless you teach Mexico history too," which is fair.

Yes, very. So you learned a lot?

Well, at that time, I came in, in the period of time when they had no textbooks for children with Mexican history. So I missed out on both the American history *and* the Mexican history a great deal.

You mean they didn't have it in English?

They didn't have it in English.

They had it in Spanish?

Yes. So I missed out on some of that.

So it isn't like you played with the kids who weren't Mormon. You went to a different school, so you didn't interact a whole lot?

Not too much, no.

So when was the first time you set eyes on the United States?

Well, probably, like I say, when I came away to college.

And you hadn't seen the college?

No, it was my first trip to Utah.

Were you excited?

Oh yes! But my older brothers and sisters had all been there, so it felt like you were just going where you were supposed to go. [laughs]

And when they went to college, would they come back and then tell you about it?

Oh yes.

So tell me, when you went, did you go alone, or with others from the Mormon Colony who were also going to start college?

I think there were seven or eight that came to BYU. There were others that went to other [colleges], but I think there were seven or eight.

Did you travel together?

No.

How did you travel there?

I came with my older sister that had been there, and we met, in El Paso, met some almost relatives, distant relatives, and we rode with them by car.

How old were you then?

I was eighteen.

How did you travel?

In the car.

So you were kind of lucky, because your sisters and brothers were there ahead and kind of looked after you.

Yes. And then I lived with a sister. After I got up there, I lived with a sister who had been to BYU.

It was close enough to the college?

Yes.

How did it feel when you got there and you were starting college and away from this big, loving family?

[laughs] You know, I had a lot of adjustments to make, because I had never been in a full-sized library, and I didn't know how to use the stacks—I mean the index cards and all. We had a small library in our high school, but we'd just go ask for a book and the librarian would use the index cards and go find it for you. But when you get in college, you start doing some research and that, and I felt lost. I felt terribly inefficient and lost. But experience does a lot of things for you. [laughs]

Yeah. So tell me a little about your new life there in college, leading, of course, to when you met Chester.

Well college was so fun! It really was. There's so many things that are just fun and it's the first time I'd been on ice skates, and first time I'd been—we hadn't seen much snow or anything—and first time I was working during the Christmas holidays, and the kids were going down the hill on their sleighs, and I said, "Oh, would you let me ride? I'll give you a nickel if you'll let me."

What kind of work were you doing?

Well, I was working in the bindery part. During Christmas time, why, we had some projects that we were doing there with the library, because it was closed. I had the keys to the stacks and all to help while the teachers were gone.

So they taught you how to do that?

Yes.

What were the subjects that you were taking that you found the most interesting to you?

Probably the social studies. I liked interacting with people, and I think maybe that's where I felt it comfortable.

Where and when did you meet Chester?

Just going back, I took, like I say, the social classes, but I went into education. I was trained to be a teacher. So I did take a lot of education classes.

Were you going towards a degree in that?

Yes. Yes, that's what I was going towards.

When did you meet Chester?

Well, the first year I was at BYU, I had a sewing class with his sister. She was a married sister that was coming back and taking some more hours on *her* degree. And she was living with her mother and father and Chester was the unmarried son at home. She kept saying to me, "Now I want you to meet my brother." And I felt like, "Oh, I have other..."

You weren't dating?

Yes, I was dating, but I didn't feel like...I mean, someone I didn't know or anything, I just wanted to meet the fellow first. She kept pressuring me and I just put her off, "I'm busy." Well, when it came Christmastime and she was going to be gone because she was only staying that one term, she said, "Well, I want to set you up before I leave. Please, will you?" So I said, "Well, okay." So it was a blind date. And it was interesting: shortly before this time—I have to tell this, I don't know if my husband would be happy or not! [laughs]

I won't tell him.

But it was interesting because the fellow that we worked for, Mr. Clark, lived down off the hill, and we had some questions. And so we walked down...

Who's we?

Those that were working at the library together.

Oh, on the bindery?

Yes. No, this was while we were working in the stacks. Mr. Bun was in the bindery, but Mr. Clark was [in the stacks]. And we had some questions, so we thought, "Well, we will walk down and ask him these questions." And as we walked past, Mr. Clark was living in the Young's apartments that they had there, and [we] went right past their place. And as we left there, I saw a man standing out there, and he had on a pair of bib overalls, *big, big bulky ones—big things!* And as I passed I said laughingly to the others that were with me, "That poor man's wife!" And we went on past and went down to Mr. Clark's. And that's all the remark I made. Well after this blind date with Chester, after he took me out—we went out to a show as I remember—and then he took me to his home and I said, "[gasps] This is that poor man! This is the man!" [laughter]

Now, let's back up. He picked you up? Where did you meet?

Yes, it was a blind date, like I said, and he picked me up at my sister's home where I was staying.

Now what I want to know immediately is, when you saw him, what was your initial reaction? You know what happens with blind dates? You say "mmm!" [expressing delight], or you go "oh" [expressing disappointment]. [chuckles]

Well I think my sister was more concerned than I was. I was ready for a little something, but she came in, because I was not in the living room when she answered the door, and she knew it was a blind date.

Oh, okay, so she saw him first.

And she came in and said, "Nelda, he's older than you are. He's older than you are."

Oh, how much older is he?

Ten years older than I. Then I went home for the summer and Chester was writing to me. My father asked about him and I said, "He's just too old for me." And my father said, "Age is not a criteria for marriage. If he's a good man, you can be happy with him." And he didn't say "marry him," he just said, "it's more important to find a good man than to..." So he just kind of said, "Well, it's okay."

So then what happened?

Well we wrote during that summer, then during the summertime I kind of felt like I was going to call it off. And I wrote and told him...

He was proposing in the letters?

Well kind of, so close to it. And I just said, "Cool it." [laughter] And so by the time I got back to school, when I came back to Provo, I was taking my best girlfriend back to BYU. She'd been going to a junior college, and she was going *with* me. And I was so anxious to show her around and show her Salt Lake City, and dah, dah, dah. When we were at school, there were very few that had cars. But Chester had a car, and I thought I could use him. [laughter] So I got in touch with him and asked him if he could take us. Well, he consented, but I said, "This is just to show Aleene around, it isn't anything serious." But he was very gracious about it, and he took us around. But then after I started dating other fellows when I went back, I missed him.

I could see that there were some qualities there that I liked. So we, should I say, “made up,” and then we were married the following September.

Meanwhile did you go back another summer?

Yes I did.

That must have been hard for both of you.

He took me home.

He came home with you?

Yes, because my father sort of insisted he meet people. He wanted to, so he took my girlfriend and another girl and me home, all of us.

You mean you drove?

Yes, we drove as far as El Paso, but then we took the train on down, rather than to get insurance on the car. So we took the train down.

Did your father like him?

Well, he must have done, because he called in the neighbors to meet him! [laughter]

So that was kind of an engagement party?

Yes, I already had my ring. My father came to April Conference and he met him then.

What's April Conference?

That's LDS General Conference, April Conference, at Salt Lake City. [Special

Church-wide meetings held twice a year, April and October. [Tr.]]

Okay, so your dad had come and met him?

Yes, because like I say, he had held offices and had come. And he met him and he met his father and mother.

Oh, his parents were still...

Yes, his parents were still living, and so he met them.

Were they happy with you, I'm sure?

Well, I *hope* they were—I think they were. [chuckles]

Then when were you married?

We were married September 25, 1941.

Now whatever you can tell me about the wedding. What did you wear?

When I came back, this would have been the third year to school. I mean, I didn't go to school, but I came back. I was staying in my sister's apartment with her. She was teaching school there at BYU by then. So I was staying with her until the time of my marriage. And I was excited, naturally, and that morning I was waiting for him to pick me up to take me to Salt Lake—we were married in the Salt Lake Temple—and I heard a knock at the door, and I go to run to the door, and my sister said, “Nelda, come back here, you're in your slip! Get some clothes on!” [laughter] I was excited, yes! But she called me back and so I met him presentably. [chuckles]

What did you wear for your wedding?

I made my wedding dress from lovely white satin. I used a Vogue pattern which cost one dollar. At that time, most patterns cost twenty-five to thirty-five cents. The dress had a sweetheart neckline, a fitted dropped waist with an attached floor-length gores skirt. Loops over small covered buttons closed the sleeves at the wrist. Small covered buttons came from the neckline to the waist. My going away outfit was a black dress with eyelet embroidery collar on it, and of course we wore a hat at that time and the accessories with it.

Do you have a wedding picture?

Well, not per se, no.

None taken that day with your outfit that day?

No, we didn't have a reception.

It was just very private?

My family was there, and very quiet.

And then where'd you go after your wedding?

We just visited around Salt Lake City. We were at Covey's Hotel there and the fair was on. He didn't have very long off, because he'd been taking his time off to take me home to Mexico! [laughter]

So now where did you make your first home as a married couple?

We were in Provo. We lived in one of the apartments that he and his father had there.

What was your life like in that early period?

I did some substituting at school, because I had started on a degree, but I didn't follow completely through. But apparently they felt good enough about me at the training school there at BYU I did some substitute work. I worked in the Church and in the community.

And what was Chester doing?

He was working for the state roads at that time.

Did you furnish your apartment, or was it furnished?

We furnished some, yes. We went together and I remember [we] bought a little dining table and chairs. He had moved a bed in at that time. There was, naturally, the fridge and the stove. But I made the curtains and things after.

How long did you stay there?

Until March—from September 'til March.

And then where did you go?

We moved out to Snake Valley, Nevada.

Nevada?

Yes, it's over in the same valley that Lima Caves is in.

So you came to Nevada.

The valley was called that, but we were right on the border. We owned land in Utah and in Nevada.

Oh, part was Nevada?!

Yes.

I didn't realize that.

We were on three counti Lincoln County, I think it was; Beaver County; and Millard County we had property.

So was that like a farm or ranch?

I should say when we first went, we went out there and leased. And then we went into the ranching, which was cattle ranching, as well as farming.

Was it just the two of you?

His brother was with him.

Which brother?

Ted. His real name was Theodore, but we called him Ted.

Was he alone?

Yes, he was not married at the time. He had been divorced.

What was the housing there? What kind of a place did you live in? When you bought the ranch, was there a house on the property?

Yes.

And what was that like?

It was an old adobe house that had been framed. Also part of it was added-on little by little to it. But it was considered a pretty nice house at that time—a big screened porch on the front.

And was there room for your brother-in-law in the house?

Yes, there was room in there. There was no electricity in the house, no running water. It was just one of those things.

So tell me, did you have children yet?

No, not at that time.

No. So this was soon after you were married? Pretty soon after.

Yes, soon after.

And then tell me what your life was like there at the ranch.

It was always a busy life, but with us, we were working on a so to speak, shoestring. We didn't have any finances. And it's interesting: You know, when the men would go out to get wood, because we heated with wood and cooked with it, I often went with them when there were no children involved, and I picked up bones and we took the bones in and sold them and it bought our flour. Now the law requires they have to be sterilized and this and that and the other in the process. They get them from the slaughterhouses and they know that they're good for the bone meal for fertilizer.

Oh, for fertilizer! Okay. So you would make fertilizer from them?

No, we took them in to a by-product place and sold them. And then it would buy our flour.

Oh, I see. And so what was your day like? Did you have a garden?

Yes, but you know it's interesting, because my friends in Provo where we had lived said, "What do you do to take up the time?" I wished those friends could have followed me around. Along with the regular housekeeping, I made cheese, butter, soap, and washed by hand on a scrubbing board. During the early years of ranching we had no modern conveniences. I cooked on a wood stove, used kerosene lamps, carried water from a well in the yard which had a hand pump on it. Any hired help lived with the family. We were rather careful who we hired.

I see, so you'd have family live with you?

Yes.

And how did you do your laundry?

Well we had an old gasoline washer that Mrs. Ryan had left. We had bought it with the ranch. But all of the water had to be pumped by hand with the old hand pump and carried into the wood stove and heated on the boiler, carried over to the washer.

That sounds like a busy day. When did you have your first child?

First child, Deanne, was born January 9, 1943.

Was that there at this ranch?

That was while we were out ranching, yes.

Where did you have your baby?

I went back to Provo. Well, Phyllis [the seventh child] was the first one that wasn't born there. There were only three that weren't born in Provo.

So there was a hospital there?

In Provo, yes. And then I had a sister living there, and his family was there. And so I had someone to stay with before and after.

Yes, especially your first child. Was everything okay?

Everything's been good with all of them.

So you took her back to the ranch.

Yes.

And you had to do diapers? [chuckles]

Yes, that started. That's before disposables.

How long did you stay at that ranch?

We stayed there and moved over to this ranch in 1959, permanently. We had owned it, but...

So you stayed at that ranch, where you lived when your first child was born, you stayed there until you moved here?

Yes, except periodically I came over for the summers occasionally, because my husband's brother was here.

But your permanent home was still there?

Yes.

I don't want to move too far here yet. Now how many children did you have at that ranch in [Snake Valley].

Seven of them were born while we were over there, yes. No, in fact, eight was, because

we left. There's only one that was born after we came.

Okay, so you had eight. So I don't have to ask you what you were doing! [laughter] So then Chester told me how he first came over to buy cattle, and told me that story of how he got the ranch. When he came home, before you saw it, and told you that, how did you feel?

Well, I was a little apprehensive about picking up and leaving, but he said it was a good deal, and I just trusted him and wanted what he felt was good.

So when is the first time you saw this ranch?

That was sometime, oh, in maybe 1952.

Did you come with the whole family?

No, I came, I left most of the family. I brought the baby with me.

Where were the other kids?

They stayed at home with the older children, but I came with Chester, just made the trip over.

So your older children were old enough by then?

Yes.

How old was your oldest by then?

Well, fifty-one from forty-three...Let's see, she was twelve or thirteen years old.

And they were raised to be that responsible, huh?

That's right.

They didn't fight or get in trouble?

Well...

Was there an adult around?

Yes, but we lived almost two miles from anyone. But they were very resourceful, the children.

Did any adult come over to look in on them?

I didn't arrange for it.

What did you do, did you drive here?

Yes, I came with my husband.

How long a drive, how many miles is it from that ranch to this one?

Um, it's close to two hundred. Two hundred and something.

Oh, that's not far.

Two hundred and maybe twenty-five, thirty.

Oh, that's not far. So you came, and tell me what your first impression was of this area.

Well we got here at night, and so my first impressions weren't until the next morning. But it was cool in the morning and it was pleasant. The house was surrounded by large cottonwood trees, and it was shady. But it was very pleasant, very pleasant.

And how long did you stay?

I don't recall, but I think only one night. We turned around and went back.

So then you felt satisfied about that?

Well, we'd already bought it by then.
[laughter]

How many years was it before you moved here permanently?

It was several years, because a lot of it was under problems, and the water problems. So we came here maybe nine years later. I think it was in 1959 when we moved here.

In that interim during the time it was first bought and you moved here, did you come here again?

I don't recall coming. My husband did. My husband was back and forth, but I don't recall coming.

So it was quite a long time. It was eight years later that you actually... Were you busy trying to pack and sell the other place too? That was a [big] move for such a big family.

It was several months after we had sold before we had to leave, and we had our own truck, so every time one of the men would come, they'd bring part of it. At first we came just for summers and went clear back to Delta, even though it was a long ways. We weren't acquainted here, and the children were doing well in school there, and we had our own trucks that we could just move. And so we went clear back to Delta, which is three hundred miles.

You mean from here you went? because there were no schools here?

No, because there was not a Church organization here, and we felt that a Church

organization was very important for our children.

That's one of the things I asked Chester when he was considering coming, was there a church yet? So now, when you heard there was not a church, which was very important in your life, how did you react to that?

Well, we just decided we'd go where there was one! [laughs]

So would Chester stay here?

Yes, and like I say...

And you would go back there with all the kids?

Yes, we did until I think we only went two winters away. And Ted, my husband's brother, had a very serious accident. And so we stayed. He couldn't get around. It was an explosion, and we stayed until Christmastime to get him on his feet a little better. And the children went to school in Austin, and that was their first experience. But we went on back over to Delta, because our first daughter was ready to graduate, and she wanted to graduate from her school in Delta.

So was Chester here all that winter?

Yes.

So that was hard.

Yes.

And you couldn't come weekends, it was too far.

No.

It must have been hard. How did the kids feel about moving here?

I think they felt it was exciting. They kind of went along with what parents do. There wasn't any type of rebellion or that type of thing.

But they wanted to go back to Delta?

Yes. Except I remember our oldest son, Lavar, cried when we sold the other ranch and left it. He had a lot of memories and things, and it wasn't his association that he had there, it was just leaving the ranch.

And he also probably worked on that ranch.

Oh very much, very much.

Now, when they came here and went to school, first I want to know from you, was there a school here in Smoky Valley when you came? an elementary?

That had been discontinued. There had been formerly, yes, but then they started busing them from here into Austin.

From the time you came?

Uh-huh.

And they'd come and pick them up?

The bus situation was that from all of the high school students from Round Mountain and that area came to Austin because there's no high school in Round Mountain. Mrs. Darrough would pick up all of the students and then she would stop at our ranch and pick up *our* children. And they would proceed

down to where Gillman is, and the Bells lived there. And they had leased with the school—they had their own private bus—and then they transported them to Austin. At night they came to Bell's again, and Mrs. Darrough picked them up and brought them to the ranch.

So that must have been fun, going on the bus. Where was the school? Was it the one up on the hill?

Yes, the old grade—the one where they have the grade school, uh-huh.

Was Essie Strickland the teacher for any of your kids?

Yes, later on, she was.

Uh-huh, I interviewed her. I heard what a good teacher she was. Did you feel it was good schooling compared to where they came from?

In lots of ways, yes. I missed the social—it didn't seem like they had as many social interactions, and community involvement with the school, that we had had in Utah. There was no music here. There was no art here. There were some of those things that I *really* missed.

When they were going to school in Utah, was it a Mormon private school?

Oh no. It was a county public school.

Did they start to make friends in Austin?

Oh, immediately, yes. I think that the people accepted them. I didn't feel that there was any problem.

Good. There was no discrimination against Mormons or anything?

I didn't feel that.

Good. Now let's get back onto the ranch, and tell me—I understand there was a different house you first lived in.

Yes.

Tell me what it looked like when you came to live here, compared to today. Describe it to me—the ranch and the house. Start with the house and then move to the ranch. Were there trees? Was there a garden? You're such a wonderful gardener.

The house was a big cinder brick house, and it had the upstairs, although it wasn't insulated at all. In fact, in the wintertime, the children would take a hot water bottle to bed, and if they kicked it out of the bed, it'd be frozen the next morning.

Oh, you're kidding!

So it was not every night, but there was times when it was...

No heat?

No, no heat upstairs. And we used to take the children and I would warm a blanket on the stove and wrap it around them, take them up to a cold bed. We were well, we were well and stayed well, and I don't remember the children complaining. That was just part of the life. Like I said, we heated with the wood stoves then. And also there was a cookstove that was a wood stove, although they had moved in a propane stove also, in their kitchen at that time.

What about electricity?

No electricity, no running water. They did have a sink that the water could run out of. There was also a bathtub that was there, but no water into it.

No faucet. [laughter] You had to heat water and dump it in there?

Yes.

But you could drain it?

Yes, you could drain it.

Did the drainage go out where it could water things?

No. No, there was a sort of a septic tank fixed out there.

So there was a lot of work to do.

Well, naturally, yes. But I have to say, I usually bathed the children, the small ones, all in the round tub because it took less water than to fill up the big tub! [laughter]

Now, going to the outside of the ranch and looking at the beautiful growth of trees and plants and gardens, what did it look like then? What was here then?

The house was almost completely surrounded with the big cottonwood trees. In fact, they just, in the last week, have cut down the last old cottonwood tree that was there. Some of them were dying, even at the time. One was leaning against the house where it even had made an indentation against the house, because it was old and leaning against it. We were fearful that a wind might blow

them over. And some of the others were dying. Also, the fences around the corrals were done with poles—upright—not long poles, but upright poles, most of them were. The rock buildings that were out, I always loved them—beautiful things they had made—the barn and the smokehouse that was behind.

Is that still there for me to take pictures?

Yes, both of those are still standing. The water situation was such that it came from the creek above us. Earlier, they had had cisterns that they stored it in. But when we got here, they had brought it, just ran down the little creek, then when it got close to the house they had a pipe that came down. And on the fall of it, it was enough that you could put a bucket under it to fill up with water from the pipe as it ran.

Did it ever freeze?

Well in the wintertime that was always a problem, to get water. But there were willows out around down this creek that came—the willows came almost down to the house, and clear extended way up, they've grown way out on both sides of them. The garden plot was not as large as what we made it after, but to the south of the house was a garden plot. There was no cement walks, no grass in front. There was a fence in front that kept the animals out.

Were there flowers?

No, I don't remember any, except maybe some of the old perennial vines of some type.

Of course you were real busy with all these kids, but what was your first project to start making some changes—whether it was inside the house or outside—what were some of your top priorities?

Well, you know, I think most of the thing lots of time, is to keep the children clean and fed [laughs] is the top priority! [laughter] When you're all busy, that's true, it does take a lot of that. But I felt the need to get in and get the house clean, too, and do some painting. There was like a pantry, and there were open shelves in the pantry. And at the time I hung curtains over them. The pots and the pans and the dishes were all right there, so I felt that they needed to be covered.

Did some of your older girls help you with these projects?

Yes, they did, and with the painting and different things, they did. And the scrubbing and the cleaning.

And then once you got that kind of underway, what did you do outside?

Well we did a lot of raking. When we moved over here as a family—we had owned the ranch, as I said, before. Because of the water rights, we'd leased it to people and we didn't move over here.

But others were living in the house?

Others had lived there, and it was—oh!—it was a disaster in lots of ways. The garbage they had just thrown out in the willows the cans. We hauled off two cattle truck loads of just things. We didn't put the tailgate in, but what we could just throw into the back, just cans and bottles and things that were thrown in the willows. That was one of our first priorities, after we got the house clean, was to get the yard clean.

Of course I learned from Chester what he and the boys were busy doing. When you came, you said you went back with the children

because there was no church here then. Tell me, gradually, how the Mormons started to come in, until you finally developed a Mormon community and church.

We weren't aware, because we didn't go into Austin, we held just a little get-together, Sunday School so to speak, on Sunday with our family, and teaching them.

Your own, just your immediate...

Just our own family and those that were here. But the forest ranger in Austin was Steve Rushton, and he was interested. He had, I don't know, two or three small children.

And they were Mormons?

Yes. And he had wanted to see if something couldn't be done about a little organization here. He came out, along with Glen Johnson, who was head of the Branch or congregation in Battle Mountain...

Oh, there was one there?

Yes...to see if we would be interested, or would we consent to stay for the winters if they got a Church organization going? Because I think everyone realized we were leaving for those reasons. Apparently it was not a secret.

Yes, sure.

So he came and talked with us, and we told them that yes, we would, after we had had a chance to talk it over. So it was in 1963 that all of the people that were in the area met in at what was the ranger's home—at that time was Steve Rushton's. It's where Raleys live now. And they met there and the Church officials,

the Stake Presidency from Elko, came down and asked if we wanted to organize, if that's what we would like to do.

Was it just your two families at that time?

No, there the FARRS had moved out to the Willow Ranch by then. Their family was very young. There was two brothers and a son.

Oh, a big family?

Not too many. But the children that were there, two were teenagers, but the others were preschool. But they were there. Up in Iowa Canyon, Erma McIntosh was up there. She was LDS. Out at New Pass Mine, Kathy [Jung] and her husband.

So word of mouth began to...

Well, they knew, and they had contacted these people, so they attended. There was a group of them that attended.

And how often did you meet?

Every week. Yes, and then during the summertime, they met with the young people every week also. The FARRS' youth would come, and the FARRS had a station wagon, and they would take turns holding what we called "Mutual" [Mutual Improvement Association, or MIA, the youth group of the Church] at our home or at Jung's home, or out at the McIntosh home. There was no active families in Austin.

Is that right?!

No. So as long as Steve Rushton was there, we met in their home. But it wasn't long until he was transferred, in fact, and he made

arrangements for us to rent the old Legion Hall.

Where was that?

In Austin, right up behind Joe Ramos' station. It was Casady Station then. And we rented the Legion Hall for Sundays. Mr. Gleason was a member of the Legion, apparently, and it was he that we made arrangements [through]. He would accommodate us by going in and starting the oil stove, sometimes, to warm it up before, so it would be warm before we got there, because we all came from outlying areas, so it'd be a little warmer. And there was one Sunday we got there, and the oil stove had puffed all of the soot [laughs] out all over everything.

Oh my!

So we just cleaned that up and went in. There were many times we met in the building when it was so cold we brought blankets. We could see our breath.

Oh my! So how many years did you meet in that hall?

After he left, it worked out nicely, but it was after Schmidtleins came that...He came as the new forest ranger to Austin. When we were attending church for the second winter, I think it was, in the old Legion Hall, he said, "It's just too cold here! Come up to my house for today." And it got to be every Sunday, and every Sunday, so we discontinued renting that building, and met again in the same house that we had organized in, because Schmidtleins had moved into that home.

Now, I need to ask you several questions, because there were a lot of Schmidtleins. So

you need to tell me the first name of this family, and the relationship to the people who sold you this place. You want to help us with that first?

Don Schmidtlein was the ranger, and his wife, lone, but we always called her Toni. She's known by Toni. He was a grandson of the people who first settled this ranch, but his father, he had grown up here. Don had grown up on this ranch as a boy, on the Kingston Ranch, but been back and forth.

That's very interesting. When the Schmidtleins who sold you this lived here, were they Mormons?

Only Don and his wife. He was a convert, but the rest of the family were not.

So then you met in their home. Where was that home where you met, in Don Schmidtlein's home?

It was the ranger's home, which is the one that Raleys live in—the same home that it was organized in.

Okay, fine.

And after a few years, the home, the Couch home, just across the street, where the present LDS church is, came up for sale. And it was through Don's efforts and all, we decided to buy that home to convert it into a little church.

Oh, so the Mormon church that's there now?

No, it was an old home. But we took out a partition and made it so it was large enough for the congregation to meet in. And it met our needs. I say it met our needs, but it was difficult. And over the years they struggled

and worked and we kept getting promises. In the meantime, after we moved into that house...The house belonged to Earl Couch, and it was purchased for \$3,000 at the time. And that was around the year 1967 that we moved into that.

Now, can you tell me, how big was the Mormon congregation by that time, when you moved into the house?

We probably had thirty people coming.

About thirty. Did everyone chip in to buy that house? How did you get funds for it?

It was interesting, because we got it interest-free if it were paid off within three years, I think, or something. But people donated, and mostly I think Don Schmidlein did the custodial work free, which applied to it. And I think [within] one year it was paid off.

Oh, that's amazing.

So that took care of that.

There were about thirty people, or thirty families?

No, thirty people—a lot of little children.

I was going to say, that built it up very quickly.

And then it was in 1974 that we at that time felt that because of the gas shortage and the problems that Fallon was closer than Elko to go for our stake meetings.

Oh, did you used to go to...

Every month, we went up for leadership meetings and training.

Were you a leader?

I was Relief Society President [women's auxiliary [Tr.]] from the beginning, yes. And it was just a long ways to go for these priesthood meetings and Relief Society meetings. More people were doing their business in Fallon than Elko, so we talked about the possibility...Well, in fact, from Salt Lake, they asked us to consolidate what we could, so that there was not as much gas used. And I think that was where it was initiated.

Let me back up and ask, because I don't know that much about it: Does the Mormon Church, like many others, have a paid bishop or priest or leader? Or how did it work?

This is all volunteer. We were never paid for transportation. That's on your own. You went and you came. Anyone that holds an office goes and comes and they perform. It's by an appointment, so to speak. It's not by voting or that you *want* the office, you are called and appointed.

I'm not talking about the offices, I'm talking about who leads the services and who does all of the religious functions.

That's what I mean. Those leaders are all...

Oh, they're lay people?

They're lay people, yes.

So they can perform all those ceremonies?

Yes, after they have been set apart.

And trained?

Well, they train by doing, a lot of them. [chuckles]

All of your members participating?

True.

Now I understand. So you didn't have to get money to pay some full-time religious person.

No.

Okay.

But after we found the difference was, there was a savings of 150 miles on a round trip, which was quite a bit—going to Fallon rather than Elko.

How many miles to Elko, and how many to Fallon?

Fallon is about 110 from Austin, and I think Elko's about 180, something like that.

And then round trip.

And then round trip.

That really adds it up. So when did you start preparing for the really nice Mormon church you now have?

Well, that's what I was going to tell you about. We just outgrew this. Now our stake headquarters, so to speak, were in Fallon, and the different men came out and different things, and we just outgrew the building, and they kept telling us we would get one, and they would do what they could. But Austin is difficult because of the mining rights that are held by so many—underground mining rights. And the Church did not want to buy anything that had any prior mining rights or did not have clear title.

Where they could take it away?

Well, underneath, mine underneath or something. I don't understand. So that limited to what you could buy.

I see. Now let me back up a little bit. When you say "it grew so fast because of Fallon," I don't understand what that means.

We had one or two more families that moved in, maybe with the State Highway, maybe with government jobs or such. Most of them were not permanent people—Forest Service and different government agencies. I think maybe that our leaders felt like that we needed it. We were still feeling like we could make do. But they could see our crowded conditions, and they felt that we should be having something a little better. Now our congregation grew a lot of the time because maybe the highway, when the highway was built, there would be LDS people come in. There were government jobs, the forest service, a survey crew that came in. They were not permanent people, but it made an influx in our congregation. And when, after our headquarters were changed to Fallon, they felt that we really needed a new building. And for a long time, they looked for appropriate property to build on. But it just seemed like there wasn't any available. Though we owned the property, and it was clear, we couldn't build on it. The Church specified that it has to be so large a property before you build on it, in case it has to be expanded.

Oh, that's very wise. Now, so when did you first buy the property?

It was about in 1966 or 1967, we bought the property.

So you had the property for quite a long time. So you bought that property, and they had

determined there were no mining rights under it?

That's right.

Okay. And now when did you start the plans for building the church?

Well our stake president came out, and it was interesting, he said, "I promise you, before the year is ended, you'll have a new building started here," because we had been just struggling so hard on it, trying to do something. And he told me later, he said, "I thought, 'What have I said? I'd better get busy fast!'" And so he contacted people. You see, in our Church, the Church comes in and builds your building for you. So it wasn't a matter of us...We didn't have to raise the money, although we did tear down the old building. Going back again, we hadn't found a suitable place, and the Church would not allow us to build on that, because the property was not large enough for what they wanted—expansion. But through our stake president working, he got permission that they could build on that spot. So it was in October of 1985 we started tearing the building down—the building we'd been meeting in, the old Couch home.

Oh, the house! Okay, now I get it. I was confused. That house was where the church is now, on that property.

Yes, on that property.

I see, so by tearing the house down, you had enough space for expansion?

Well, it's in the same spot. Still, they just granted us permission on a smaller property than what they normally okay.

So it took about nineteen years?

Well, something like that.

1966 to 1985.

That seems like a long time, doesn't it?

Uh-huh.

But it moved quickly. After we tore the building down, we met in a double-wide [trailer] out at Morris Mills for during that period of time when they were constructing. Then it was in April of 1986 that we held our first meeting in that building.

Now, did your group here have a say as to the architectural style? Or is there a style that is uniform?

Not necessarily, although our floor plan is the same as Gabbs. The Church does have plans, and you look at them and see if you approve or not. But that saves a lot of architecture [fees], so they try it. But this was a new plan, and these are the only two buildings that they've built by that plan, and they have decided that maybe something else would be a little better, different. But ours and the chapel at Gabbs were being built about the same time, with the same plan.

What is the size of your congregation now?

We have maybe sixty that attend.

That's a good size for such a tiny, small place.

They still come from outlying areas.

Like where?

We have most of them coming from Smoky Valley, Youngs. [laughs]

That's right, because now you have your sons and their families. Now, before we move away, is there any more information, or do you want to later maybe add something that we can keep for the record, the history of the Church?

Well, it's interesting, when the Church first came into Austin, I think most of the people felt like that the Mormon ladies were good cooks, and we were asked on various occasions to cater, and we started catering. We catered for the Soil Conservation banquet, the Lion banquet.

How interesting!

And at that time, the Relief Society raised its own funds. And so we would do that as a Relief Society. When Governor [Paul] Laxault came to Austin, we catered for that affair, and raised funds in that way. So we became known. At the time, there was not adequate facilities for eating out, as much, when they first asked us.

Now, tell me a little bit about the role of the Relief Society, for those who may not know.

Well, the Relief Society is the women's auxiliary of the Church. At the present time, all women eighteen and over are enrolled. They're just on our rolls, and the Relief Society president is responsible for them. Our motto is "Charity Never Faileth." So we see very much to the temporal needs of those around, as well, there are those that have spiritual needs also.

Can you put that in more concrete terms as to some of the ways that you help these young

women? You help just women? Not fellows, not families?

Well, certainly we do, because the woman is the heart of the family. Now then, the Mormon Church is quite a close-knit church, especially when a congregation is small like this. Very often if a mother was having a new baby, and there's no hospital in Austin, we would take the family. At times of death, we always, like they do in Austin anyway, provide food or help in those ways. And there are times when someone is a little depressed or lonely, that we try to go in and encourage them. We have a Visiting Teaching program where every woman in the Church should be visited once a month. They go from home to home, and that way they get a chance to see what the condition of the home is, and where maybe there are needs, that are reported back to the president for her to take care of if there are needs.

A couple of other questions: Is there also here, like I believe in Salt Lake, where food is set aside, so if anyone needs food...

You mean our own personal storage? or a group?

Yes.

We *all* have been encouraged to have our year's supply on hand. They have bishops' storehouses, they call. But our nearest one was in Elko when we were there. Now, the nearest one is in Sparks. And if there are those that need...But in the Austin area, we have never had a reason to use that.

Is there another organization that helps the young men and the men?

Well they work with the priesthood mostly. They have their priesthood quorums. And then the Primary is the children's organization. And the young men and young women have a youth organization [Mutual Improvement Association—now known as Young Men and Young Women].

So it's wonderful how you all take care of each other. So before we leave the Church, is there anything pertinent in this area, Austin, and the Church there, that you want to add before we move back to your home life?

Well, I think that it has been an example to the community in many ways. We have been called, when they've seen the things we have done, we have been asked to please take over and serve. I remember when Mildred Acree died, a respected individual in the community, and they asked us, "Will you please take over and do the serving after the funeral?" I mean, arrange it, and make it. Then just this last year was our Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the Relief Society. And we were asked to choose a project that would be a community project, that would benefit the community. So all over the world, the people that belong to the Relief Society were choosing a project. We chose to plat the Austin cemetery. It had never been planed before, and with the help of Anne Schiechl who has been very interested in this, we met every Tuesday and Thursday mornings early and went over every single grave and recorded names and dates and so that it can be platted. If it's an unknown grave or if it's a possible grave, that was always...But that was our community project that we did for the Sesquicentennial.

Now what kind of a cemetery is it? Is it all denominations? All people? What kind of a cemetery?

The cemetery, there's a Masons' cemetery, I think, there. And I think there's what they call the Indian cemetery. And then I think the other is just general cemetery.

Now I want to move back into your home with all of your children and find out a little more. We talked about the elementary grades where they were bused in. Now what did they do about high school?

Well, there was a high school in Austin. They all rode a common bus, and of course they all were in a common school—first grade through twelfth grade were all in the same building.

Now where was that? In Austin?

In Austin, in the old building.

Oh really? First through twelfth?

You see, it's only been three or four years since we've had the new building where they divided them.

So when your kids went, they just stayed in the same school as elementary?

Yes, all of them were in the same building, the same principal.

But they had separate classrooms, right?

Yes.

How were the high school years, as far as the education?

I think the basic education was very sufficient, but the fine arts and the liberal arts, there was just nothing to offer.

So how was that gap filled?

Well, I always told my children when they went away to school that I would rather they get “B’s” and fill in their life with some of the things they had missed, rather than to strive so hard for just “A’s” and miss the operas and the dramas and the nicer things that they hadn’t done.

You mean when they went to college?

Yes, when they went away to college.

Did most of your children go to Brigham Young?

Well, we had some Brigham Young, some at Ricks, which is a Church college.

And where is that?

That’s in Rexsburg, Idaho. It’s a Church college also. So we had that. And one went down to Dixie College, which was not a Church school, then later to BYU.

So they listened to you? [laughter] Did they get as much of the other things?

Well, our one son was the only—we had Ralph that decided he didn’t want to go right on, he wanted to go to a trade school, and he went to Denver to an auto mechanic school. But then after his mission, he returned and graduated from BYU. But he wanted something more.

And I know one of your sons majored in economics or business?

Ralph was the one I was speaking of. The others, the girls, one of them in secondary

education, and mostly working with people, a lot of them. And Darrel was more interested in animals. It was animal husbandry that he studied. Paul did some in electronics. They all just followed their own.

That’s nice that you encouraged that.

Brigham was in business.

I heard a lot about your sons from your husband, because of the ranching. Now I want to hear a little more about your four daughters. Start with your oldest daughter, and from high school kind of bring me up-to-date with her life.

She married very soon, but she had thirteen children, all of whom are living and active in communities, doing the things. They are quite a musical family.

Where do they live?

They live in Colorado City, Arizona. And they are involved, some of them are married now, of course. Then Margaret is the second daughter. She lives in Las Vegas. She graduated from BYU with a degree in home economics, and taught for several years, went on a mission, came home, and she married Michael Dyal who is now city manager in North Las Vegas, so they live there. Then Dorothy is the next daughter. She graduated in child development, I think, something like that, with her graduation skills. But she found her work with an orthodontist before she was married and worked with that, mostly with children, with the orthodontist. Then she married Dennis Lee and they live in the Salt Lake area—they’ve been there—and they have five children. Then Phyllis is the fourth daughter. She lives in Fallon. She did a lot *with* children.

All with children. Wonderful.

They all seem to...But presently, she's working at Jeff's Office Supply, but she interacts with people very, very well.

Is she married?

Yes, she's married and has four daughters.

So that's really successful daughters. And I see the first one followed into the cultural aspect, so musical.

Yes, they do. And I think that maybe that was because of her husband, like they do. But they have quite a bit of ability. I mean, just musical ability.

Now she's in Colorado?

[Colorado] City, Arizona.

Is it because of her husband's work? What does he do?

He had a service station there, is what he has had. But now he's working in a cabinet shop.

Do you get to see your children?

Yes, of course. [chuckles] Not as often as sometimes we'd like. Now that we're in a smaller home, we can't put them all down like we used to.

Now you've got to go traveling, right? to see them all?

That's right, yes.

You were so busy, I can't see how you did anything else, but was there any other activity that you were involved with that you want to tell us about?

Well, my family was priority, always, and then Church followed. But I was very interested in the school situation, and Joe Dory, who is now deceased, came to me and he said, "Nelda, would you run for the school board?" I had never thought of that. But he said, "I think that we need a representative from Austin, and I think you could do it." And I said, "Why, I'd never thought of that." But I said, "Let me think about it." He said, "Well, you have to file for it, and you only have about a week before the filing is up. So I came home and talked with my husband..."

What year was this?

This was back in 1966. I think the filing had to be in by May or something—I don't remember just when. But it was in that summertime. And we talked about it. Joe called me and said, "Nelda, you haven't been in to file. Are you going to?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you need transportation in? I'll come, I'll do anything." I said, "No, I'll go in and I'll file." So I did, and I won the election. I served two terms, eight years on the school board. At that time we traveled to Battle Mountain each month for the board meetings. Then towards the end of my tenure, they started holding some of the school board meetings in Austin, so that the people could attend.

So this was a Lander County School Board?

Yes, Lander County School Board.

Can you tell me anything special about some of the things that were resolved during your two terms?

There were two new buildings built, and I think that in Austin we tried so hard to get a new building. I worked time and time again to get some music into the school and some art into the school. But where there's few students as there are, they hire for the basics and then if someone can fill in, if someone *has* some music, they can supply it. But there were buildings built in Battle Mountain, two buildings, during that time, and Battle Mountain was just beginning to grow when the mines started there. It seemed like most of the priorities for building went to Battle Mountain because of the expansion that was there. We tried to have the old school building condemned, to see if we could get a new one, but that didn't work. I think that maybe the thing *I* felt, with my school board experiences, I tried to soften the attitude between Austin and Battle Mountain. There still is a lot of competitiveness between them. But I tried to help the people understand that the funds we get is per capita, per attendance, and all the time the thing we met was, "Battle Mountain has it, why can't we have it?" And it was hard, and that was one of the things I tried to do. And it was during the time that I was on the school board, I personally carried the petition around to make it the law mandatory, that one representative from Austin would be on the school board.

Good. They did it?

Yes, it passed. It passed, but there had to be so many signatures on that before we could have that put on the ballot. And so that passed. So I think that was really the best thing I did.

Good contributions! I don't know how you did it all. Did you go into Austin very much, except for church?

School activities, yes. And of course celebrations, we went in for. But our boys played on the ball teams and all, and so we were very much involved with that.

PTA?

PTA. I worked with Margaret Gandolfo in probably the first PTA that was organized, that *I* knew anything about in Austin. It was interesting, when they asked me to run for the school board, I said to my husband, "Well, I guess I've been more critical and been and visited the teachers more than anyone around, about what the school *isn't* doing. Maybe I ought to consent to be in a position where I could do something constructive." And I think that was the reason that I went ahead and ran for school board.

And then having so many children, you could personally relate to the problems. That was very good. You mentioned, and I was just going to ask you that, that you did participate in some celebrations. Did you ever participate in the Fourth of July celebrations?

Oh yes, we have. In fact, our little boys one year, Brigham and Paul, won first place. We fixed them up as little miners. We had a little burro. Before the Wild Horse Act came on, we had captured a very young little burro and brought it in and had it here as a pet, for all those years. And he was *dear* to the children. And we had that with their mining outfits and the picks and all, and they took first place in that category in the parade.

Was that the Fourth of July parade?

Yes. And they felt really proud to come home with a ten-dollar bill from that [laughs] for first!

Oh, how nice!

And then we have participated in floats—individually, as a family, but now more as a church, we make floats.

So you're a visible contribution to the county.

Hopefully, we're a contribution! [chuckles]

Without a doubt. I've been admiring your beautiful flower gardens. And when you first came, they didn't exist. Tell me about when you started planting the flowers that you love so much.

Well really, when we came here, the water situation made it that all the water that went, went to the fields. Until we got a pipeline in and something where I could have water to grow flowers, I didn't work much with them. And so that was one of the things—we put in a pipeline. Earlier, I don't know whether my husband said or not, but after we came, and I told you about the water running down and the willows, he felt, and I felt like the situation for drinking water was not good, because it went through the willows and the animals went through and the chickens. So he bought two miles of [one]-inch, maybe inch-and-a-half plastic pipe, and we put it up the creek so we would get the fresh water. And then we had water that ran all day, because we got up, it didn't all dry up.

It didn't run through the soil.

And so that was helpful. But that little stream didn't do much. And we talked about the bathtub. It was interesting, because that black pipe would get so hot, that I would put a hose on the end and take it into the bathtub, and I could fill up the bathtub with hot water from that. Then they would have a real genuine bath with warm water. But we had to do that before sundown, because after the sun went down, then the water was cold, creek cold, just really cold.

So when could you start your flowers?

Well, it wasn't until about, I would say in 1963, 1965, or something like that, that we got some water to where I could count on it.

How did you do that?

Well, they put a large pipeline in. And that was the same pipeline that we fed our hydroelectric plant that we put in. But with that, when the water came, the hydroelectric plant was placed *above* the place, because when the water goes through a hydroelectric plant, it loses all its pressure, where coming down the mountain, it gains pressure. Then the sprinkler system which we put in *below* had to have some pressure.

Now wait, the sprinkler system? Tell me about that.

Well, perhaps we were the first people—I rather think we were the first people in the area that had sprinklers. And one reason I think that is, the University at Reno brought out a group of visitors that came from Africa—they were all black—to see this irrigation system. So I think that perhaps it was a novelty for this area.

Really?! In other words, your husband and sons, or your husband and somebody devised this system? Who was it?

No. Through a friend, Jim Kielhack, was from California, and he had put in some of those sprinkling systems, and we were told that he had done some in California. And so we contacted him and he put in the first one for us. We had to put in a pipeline from up the top of the mountain. It's a twelve-inch, I think it is, pipe, something, reduced to eight-inch or something. But we tarred it—the children did, and the girls.

You all helped do it?

The children did, yes. And we dug the trench ourselves. In those times, we didn't hire much done. If we couldn't do it, why we didn't do it. So they all worked with that. I didn't think the tar would ever get over! On the clothes...

What was the sprinkler like?

Well, then the pipe came down to the irrigation fields. There is a spur off from that pipe that came to the house. But the sprinkler system, the water came down through that—and still does come down through that—under pressure, which goes to the sprinklers which irrigate our ground.

Is that the irrigation that's on wheels?

Yes.

You can roll it?

Yes.

Is that the same water from the mountain?

It's the same water and the same sprinkler system we bought.

The same one, I see.

We've had to replace some of the pipes and replacements.

I see, but you have now some to your flower area?

All I have is pressurized water with a hose. So the hose can bring that. But during those years, when we were developing this, my husband and his brother Ted were chosen for the Soil Conservation Award. The District was out of Tonopah, but it included the southern part of Lander County. But they received that award two different years, probably because of their working with the irrigating and the sprinkler system, which was something very new at the time.

When did they get that award?

That award was in 1963. They received one the subsequent year, I think it was. We have property down below, so any that isn't used in the sprinkler runs on down to the meadow area where the soil is not so alluvial.

You said you have property down below? Down below what?

Down below the highway, further east of the ranch, on down.

Is that the one where your son is living?

No, no one is living there at all.

Another area?

It's just an area where there were meadows when we came, natural meadows were there. When we moved there, there was nothing under cultivation down there.

Who takes care of that? How many miles away is that?

Oh, maybe a mile.

Oh, very close. So the boys take care of that too?

Yes. So with the sprinklers, that made it a lot better. There were about thirty acres, was all that they could irrigate at that time, when we first came. And it was all done with a ditch. And I remember in the field, a big trench that maybe was as deep as my head, where when big streams would come, where it had washed out. So it has been a means of lots of conservation—not only of the water, but of the land, which they're very mindful of.

So then you started with your flower beds?

Yes, and then too I was freed a little from some of the small children, which made it so that I could have more time out. Prior to that time, it was mostly a vegetable garden.

Did you always have a vegetable garden?

We've always done that. And I'd can the vegetables, and at Thanksgiving time, I served the home-grown vegetables.

Tell us what the Thanksgiving menu would be.

I felt the spirit of gratitude, accomplishment, and joy to be able to serve a meal made almost entirely from food produced on the ranch. The menu might turkey or chicken, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, green beans

or peas, salad, pickles, hot rolls. And then always pumpkin pies and apple pies. And we had our own apples. We bought cranberries, flour, sugar, salt and spices.

Did you have your own turkeys?

For a period, we did, yes. And chicken, yes.

That's wonderful. And how did you seat this huge family?

We had a large table.

In the other house?

Yes. In fact, I've set twenty people around it at different times, so it was large and we had benches, when we had extras come, because we didn't have that many chairs. But we made a practice of always sitting down to meals. Always, that's been one of the things that we have done. That's just been part of our family tradition, to sit down to all three meals together.

That's amazing. That meant a lot of cooking.

Well, our lifestyle made it so we could do that. We had them all home for meals.

And then some meals could be a little simpler, I guess?

Yes, the evening meal usually was. I never have had the dinner meal in the evening, because I felt like the men needed a substantial breakfast, a substantial noon [meal], and then in the evening it could be something light.

Yeah, before they went to bed. Describe for me, when the kids were growing up—not little

babies, but let's say from five on—describe a kind of a typical day from the time you would wake up to start breakfast, just describe one very busy day, some of the kids being bigger, you know.

Well, for such a long time, if it were wash day, then it started the night before, because I soaked beans, because we put the beans on [chuckles] to cook on the stove that we heated the water on.

Oh, conservation!

A long period of time before we had anything but heated...In the summertime, I used a tub outside, so I built the fire out there. But in the wintertime, it was nice to have the heat inside. So that started the night before, getting the beans ready. But on a wash day, it started early. The children that were around, if it were during the summertime, were always helpful to carry the water—until we got water in the house—to carry the water and to help. But the water ran down and the fire got going before most anything else on a wash day.

Before you even made breakfast?

Yes. So as soon as it was over...And breakfast consisted, we usually had some type of hot bread, maybe biscuits, maybe hotcakes or something, and potatoes and eggs, and most always cooked cereal.

Oh, hot cereal.

Hot cereal, yes, different kinds. But that was one. And we had our own good, thick cream to go on it. Most people [chuckles] don't have that, but it makes it. And then some type of jam or jelly or something. And that was usually what our breakfast...

Everyone sit down to breakfast?

Yes.

You woke them all up early with the ranchers?

Most of the time, unless they were getting up especially early to go on the range or something. And then I would fix for them and the children would eat later.

Did the older girls help you with breakfast?

Yes. Or if they weren't, they were helping in the bedrooms or getting things, or what needed to be done. And of course there's always the little chores that need to be done around the house, all of those. Mixing bread was always...I remember I mixed bread about every other day, about eight loaves. And I remember one day I had made bread and I had it sitting out on the counter and someone came in and said, "Oh, are you freezing bread?" And I said, "Day after tomorrow, I'll make some more!" [laughter] Because—well, it just took a lot to feed. The one summer I was here, I remember before I had water or lights, I had twenty people sifting down three times a day. So it was just a busy...

[gasps] Was that just family?

It was part family, and part...Well, distant family, that were here.

Oh my! How did you handle dishes?

We heated the water on the stove, carried it to the sink that was there and washed the dishes and rinsed them.

Did you ever use paper plates?

Oh no!

Never used paper plates!

But I don't think there were very many of them in that time.

And it's expensive.

Well, it's expensive, but at that time, people just didn't...

And you weren't near a store.

That's right. In cooking, if I decided to make something, if I didn't have it, I either had to improvise or not make it. Because we didn't go to the store.

No, too far, just to run out to get a cup of sugar.

Uh-huh.

Of course at the time you were cooking each meal, you were busy...

It takes a big part of the day, when you have bread, you bake cakes, you make cookies. I remember one day Brigham came home and he said, "Mom, we don't have a thing in this house to eat, and just yesterday I know you made a cake and you made cookies and you made pudding. Why isn't there anything in this house to eat?!" [laughter]

Was there time to have at least an hour of enjoyable evening time after the dishes were done and the kids readied for bed?

Not very often. In the summertime, yes. In the summertime when the days were longer and the children didn't have schoolwork.

When they had schoolwork, we usually sat by gas lights or kerosene lights.

And helped them?

Helped them with their schoolwork or see that they got it done. And by then, why...

Time for bed.

Yes, most of the time. And so there wasn't a lot. But in the summertime, we did with the children in the afternoon and towards evening, I remember sitting and jumping rope—turning the jump rope with them, and playing "Mother May I?" and different things. It was fun.

Did your family ever go fishing in Kingston?

Sometimes. Well, my husband *loves* to fish, but he fished in an area where it was big lakes and things up by Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and places, and he never did enjoy the small streams where he said his line got tangled in the bushes, he couldn't cast. So he didn't do a lot of fishing here.

When you first moved here in the fifties, what was the communication like—phone and mail? Tell me about it.

Well we were fortunate to *have* a telephone here. I think we were on a party line of six at the time. And at that time, the Kingston Ranger Station had a phone, up there, and they were on our line. The Triple T and Bells and I think there were six, if I remember. All of us on the line, we would hear our ring.

What was your ring?

I really don't remember now.

You each had a number?

Yes, so many of the shorts or longs. And you would answer to that. But there was a telephone operator in Austin. The telephone office, so to speak, was where Joe Dory has his station now, at the old Casady Station. And Louise Streshley, along with...I don't remember the others, but I do remember her as one of the operators. And you would ring, and they'd ask for the number you wanted them to ring to. It was very interesting, because you could call the operator, and you'd say, "I'm looking for Such-and-Such. Have you seen him in town today?" And the operator would say, "Yes, I saw him pass the street." [laughter] That big window there at Joe's they have right there, and they'd say, "Yes, we've seen him on the street." "Well, if you see him, tell him I'm trying to get hold of him," or something. But we were fortunate, like I say, to have a telephone. And also, when we moved here, there was an oiled highway that went down just about a mile east of our place, so we did have that.

And did you have a car?

Yes, we had a station wagon.

Did you drive?

Yes.

Had to.

[chuckles] Yes, I would have been stuck, wouldn't I, without.

Before we go back to the telephones, did your kids learn to drive early?

They started driving long before they were legal age, because on the ranch, they were allowed, just on our own property.

Where did you shop for supplies, clothing, household items, et cetera?

Vigus Mercantile in Austin. Vigus Mercantile was an all-around store; they carried groceries, fresh meat, hardware and notions. Mr. Vigus willingly special-ordered if he didn't have an item in stock. A large potbelly wood/coal stove kept the store warm during cold weather. Several comfortable chairs were around the stove. Customers and/or friends often relaxed warming themselves and passing the time of day. It wasn't unusual to smell beans or beef stew being cooked on top of the stove. My son, who stayed after school for games or practice, appreciated Mrs. Vigus' invitation to partake of the hot nourishment. I have an idea others did too.

When did Vigus Mercantile close? It's not in Austin now.

It was never closed, it changed hands. It was the same building that's Kents now. The interior is a little different, but it's the same building.

Do you remember when it changed from Vigus to Kent?

There was an owner prior to Kent, but I can't tell you right now, I don't remember. It's been ten, fifteen years ago.

Do you find that Kent has a lot of the things that you need?

Only in emergencies. [chuckles] Of course, yes, I go in, but most of the time we try to buy when we go...

Did you used to go into the Bertrands' lumber and hardware store?

Yes. But prior to the time the Bertrands had that, before they opened that, there used to be a little...Where Carol Givens has her little place.

Oh yes, Bill Givens' mother?

Bill Givens' mother had one. You probably heard about that. But that was a little kind of like stationery store with little odds and ends in it. And then on down where T. Jones is, where he has his little shop, that used to be a little store. It was owned by Lilian Gandolfo. But *very* accommodating while Lilian was there. That's where I first met Lilian, she worked there. But you could order all your Christmas presents right through there, if you wanted to. If we wanted a tricycle or a bike, she would order it. They gift wrapped, and she had fabric. She had the thread and the laces and the buttons—kind of a dry goods in lots of ways. Not the hardware, but dry goods.

Were there more stores ten or fifteen years ago than now?

I don't think so. Well, of course Carol's turned into a restaurant.

But it gave a good restaurant in town!

[laughs] Yes. And then by then Bertrands had opened up with some of the hardware and the things that Vigus used to carry. Vigus carried cement, and very much those things. And one thing I wanted to say about Austin, I always felt like the people in Austin, when there was a project, they worked together. I have seen so many times when they wanted to do something, the people got behind it and

did it. It was like when they started the youth center. Mr. Vigus went to all the different—his suppliers—and said, "We're doing this for the community, now what will you sell me this for? what can I get this for?" Prior to that being the youth center, that used to be the fire station. That's where the fire station was. And after they built the new fire station, then that turned into that. Mr. Vigus was *very* influential in getting all the paint and everything it needed at reduced prices, *very* reduced prices.

When you wanted paint, would you get it...

You could get it from Mr. Vigus, yes.

Or he could order what you needed if you needed a lot?

Yes.

Now tell me what about the medical care here.

But first I wanted to tell you something else. When Spencer Hot Springs, the community or the area...

Where is that?

This is a little northeast of us, going off from the road going up to Monitor Valley. There is a springs there that is a hot springs. The area people decided that it would be nice for a swimming pool to be there for the children. So just different, like I said, they worked together. We took our Caterpillar out there and dug the hole for it. "We," I say—the men did. Mr. Vigus got the cinder brick for it, and they built this. It was a nice swimming pool, and then the warm water from the spring filled it. Every so often they drained the pool and they would fill it back up again

over a period. But in the fall, they drained it for the wintertime. And in the spring a group of the young kids would go scrub it out. Our boys went and scrubbed it out, help with brooms and things to get it clean. I don't remember what year it was closed, but there was a death there from a drowning. It was on BLM (Bureau of Land Management) ground, no lifeguard on duty, and liabilities, so they just bulldozed it.

I know that they have that lovely park and swimming pool in Austin.

Yes, now.

Which must be a blessing for kids living in that area, with the baseball field and the pool and the tennis and things.

The community has been wonderful about raising funds for projects for the kids, very wonderful to contribute to them, if their yearbook needed added funds besides what their advertisement had been. Anytime they went from door-to-door, people have been very cooperative and helpful in community projects, I've felt. Even though I've lived out, I've noticed this.

It seems one of the most difficult problems for the people getting older is the lack of medical care in Austin, the lack of a doctor, just a once-a-week person. Have you heard or experienced, or how has it been without having something nearby?

That's been a difficult thing. I have said that the schools lack furnishing some of the things I would like in schools, and the medical problems are probably the biggest problems I have felt for me and my family. Now with the medical end of it, we have been very fortunate

we have *not* had very many accidents, and we have not had too much serious illness. When we first came to the area, the building, there used to be a hospital in Austin, and Mrs. Snyder was a registered nurse. She could help you out with any immediate problems. In fact, there was a Mr. Brown that lived up at Kingston. When we came here, I might say, there was *no one* that lived in Kingston. Bells lived over to Gillman, and we were here. But Mr. Brown used to come with his wife, who was a native Indian, and spend the summers here. They had, across the creek, the little brick houses there, they lived outside mostly, completely. Their children, Eveline and Equal, used to walk down and bring us fish that they had caught in the stream, which was very interesting. I think they came for association with our children, and they always ate a meal with us, and then we drove them home. I think that almost once a week they came with fish for us.

You say "they."

Equal and Eveline—they were the two children of the Brown [family] that lived up Kingston, during the summertime.

How old were they when they were doing that?

I imagine early teens, ten, twelve maybe. But one day, Mr. Brown came down, he had an older model truck, and he said, "Can you take me to the doctor, my wife has cut her hand badly." And I said, "What happened?" and he said, "Well, she was wiping off the table and the knives were propped up against it, and it cut her badly, badly." And I said, "Yes, I'll take you in," and I made arrangements quickly with the children. I said, "First let me look at it." When I looked at it, he had it in a big towel-like, wrapped up, and I could see that

a little blood was oozing, and I felt like it was not wise to open it, because it would just start it. So I said, "Yes, I'll take you," and I just told the children, "We're leaving, we'll be gone." So I'd never been up to the hospital in Austin at that time, but I went up and when I got there, Mrs. Snyder came in and we were both shocked. As we took that wrap off, he had made a tourniquet of baling wire around that wrist. So she looked at it, and took it off. I would have taken it off myself, because it had been on there longer than a half-hour by the time we got there. But I didn't realize, it was covered over. So she took it off and then when she saw it, she was having a difficult time to get it to stop bleeding. The woman was a diabetic besides.

Oh my gosh!

So she called the doctor and asked for information, "How can I stop this bleeding?" And that was my first experience at stopping bleeding with pressure. I didn't know anything about that. But by she talking to the doctor in Fallon, he told her, "Don't send her until you get the bleeding stopped." And he told her how to apply the pressure and stop the bleeding. Then I called home and said, "We have to take her on to Fallon." She said we could go to Battle Mountain, but they have no blood supply in Battle Mountain. "If you need blood, you'd better go to Fallon." Well, it's ten miles further. So it was evening—she had called ahead of time—and it was evening by the time we got there...stitched up. But things like that happen, and you wish that there was some medical help a little closer. But we, like I said, for ourselves, we have been healthy, for the most part, we have learned to do a lot of things for ourselves, just like I learned that pressure technique. There are other things that I have learned over a period of time. I'm not a registered nurse, but I have dealt with

a lot of it. People have come to me, here in the valley, when something goes wrong, and "Quick, what should we do?" or "Do we need stitches here? do what?"

Do you do stitches?

Well, I did one [laughs] on my daughter once.

And then what about childbirth? Childbirth isn't always natural.

Mine were.

What about your daughters-in-law and daughters?

They go to Fallon. They've gone to Fallon.

They've gone ahead of time?

Yes. Well, not always. Sometimes my sons will call and say, "Mom, can you stay with the children?"—because I've agreed to—we have to leave." And they rush quickly.

So Fallon is the closest place?

Most of them are.

Do you also make appointments for dental work somewhere in Fallon?

Yes, Fallon mostly.

I was talking with some of the older people where there are heart attacks and things where they just can't get to them in time, or need a helicopter and it's expensive.

Well the Care Flight that comes, after Paul came home from his mission, he worked

in the mine at Kingston for money to go to school. He had an accident then up in the mine that he was—I think they called it bucking, or a buck or something—but he was going in, and his foot slipped off, and there was not a guard on it, and it took off the toes off from his—it left the little toe and the next one to it. And we were away at the time, but Bruce Woods was working with him in the mine, and he got him out and phoned Austin, and the ambulance came to meet them and then the Care Flight picked him up and took him into Reno where he could get the proper care. But that's really, except for the accident that I said my husband's brother had—that happened out of Austin and the ambulance took him into Fallon.

That took a long time.

Yes, and then on to Reno.

I think that's one of the things that is detrimental to increasing the population in Austin. Some of these older people I interview have to leave, have to move. Do you see any hope of any constant clinic or a full-time nurse? Is there any talk of that, do you know? Any possibilities?

I haven't heard anything. We were glad to get one once a week. But the population just doesn't justify full-time. This is a county arrangement, when they have the doctors come in, which has been to accommodate people.

When do the doctors come in?

We did for a while have them every Wednesday, I think it is, and they come in at Austin and take care of a few little things that they can take care of. One thing that has been very helpful in *this* valley, the mine at Round Mountain hires Hank...I don't remember his

other name. He's just a practitioner, but he has been very accommodating to people in the valley. The mine hires him, but he has allowed people in the valley to come to him. When we have had to have stitches, he's able to take care of that very well. And the girls, our sons' wives, say that they like him better than their own obstetrician or pediatrician, in dealing with the small things with the children. And one thing about him is that if he feels like he can't take care of it, he says so. It isn't like he tries to do things he's not qualified. He is able to dispense drugs, and so if antibiotics are needed or such, he's able to do that.

When you say "practitioner," do you mean he's not a full-fledged physician?

He's not a medical doctor. Well, the thing, I asked him, I said, "Why don't you return and get your medical degree?" and he said, "I'm very happy with what I'm doing and I'm satisfied, so I just don't go back."

It's real expensive to get your doctorate. We need more practitioners. Isn't it a nurse practitioner who comes once a week into Austin?

Yes.

I was told she can dispense prescriptions.

For a period of time, we had a regular medical doctor come in.

And the county isn't able to fund a full-time, or even a few days a week, practitioner?

I guess not.

That's too bad. Anything more on the medical and health issues? Do they do immunization for the kids?

The county nurse comes in and takes care of immunizations for the babies and children and school children. So that's taken care of.

That's good. A lot of the older people who can't drive, who need dental care, or doctor's treatments? How does that work? Is there any arrangement for them?

I think it's just kind neighbors that have helped them.

Is there anything through the Mormon Church where they help if some of them need care that they can't get? I'm sure you all help each other.

Children's Hospital [in Sal. Yes, but we haven't had very much experience in that, doing. There is a Primary Lake City [Tr.]] that used to be run by the LDS Church. It's nondenominational, they admit anyone. But those who *cannot* get—I think it's under twelve or something—that cannot get help, get the utmost, wonderful medical help there. But we have not experienced that. Probably the thing that *did* happen, Darrel and Carol's second child was premature. She was a little two-pound-something baby and Carol started in labor early, and we thought Tonopah was the closest place. So we rushed her on to Tonopah, and the baby was born there. And when it was premie, they flew her to Reno. And that little girl, that was clear back seventeen-plus years ago, and it cost \$23,000. But the hospitals were very kind in letting them make payments, because we couldn't make it all up at once. So that really has been one of the emergencies we've had. But she has lived and done fine with the help that we got.

I heard about Kingston when I came to Austin the first time, taken by the Bertrands. Of course in my mind, Kingston was going to be a town.

Tell me, first what is Kingston? Where the few houses before you enter the canyon where Kingston Creek is—is that what Kingston is?

Well, it's just called Kingston Canyon, and I think then the little community has taken on the name of Kingston.

Just the houses? There's no stores or anything?

There is a little store there that has milk and bread—maybe just a few little odds and ends, but it doesn't supply much—maybe soft drinks, fishing needs. But when we first came, there was no one living in Kingston whatsoever. It had been previously occupied by two or three ranches. There was a rancher up higher, but there was no one living there when we came. We often went picnicking up the canyon and had our campfire with frying hamburgers or something.

When did those houses that are there now start to be built or brought in? Do you know?

Well, it was late in the sixties, I would say.

That late?

Yes, it was, because it wasn't until after we had our sprinkling system in and all, because the man who came to put in our sprinkling system saw the possibilities there, and kind of invested, along with others, for subdividing.

He bought the land to subdivide?

Yes, he bought it. It had originally been settled by the Schmidtleins, the ranch, because some of them lived up there. Then it had changed hands several times. California people owned it, and he was able to make the deal on that. And then he still always had big

dreams of a golf course and all of the things that go with it. But there's not enough—it's too far away for people for retirement. Like he had planned for, if we didn't own our own property here, I certainly would not be living here. I don't see older people buying a little bit of property out this far away from anything—hospitals, groceries, entertainment...

Drugstore.

Yes. Myself, I wouldn't be choosing that, but there's some people that like the outdoors and have chosen to.

Because of the fishing and beauty?

Yes.

Do you know anything at all about who buys it and where they're from? Are they people who have a second home here?

Some of them have, but for the most part, a lot of them sold their homes and came here, some that I know. And then after there were some of them that were dissatisfied, and they had made down payments or something, and they just let them go, because they found out that for older people it just wasn't good living.

No. Now, the ones that you know, are they older? or are they young enough to...

Well, since the mining came in—which was later—then we've had other young families come in. But initially, when the first people that came in, most of them, I don't recall any of them with even teenage children at home, that moved in. Then later on, like I say, with the mining development, when they moved in homes, and young people moved in.

Now, going north, I see that someone has properties for sale where they bought land and then they're subdividing it.

Well this same group of people got ahold of that, because Mrs. Beard, that had the Gillman property, also had some property up the canyon. And so with the deal, they got this or something, is the way I understand it.

Yeah, I see a lot of little places there. Who's buying there?

Well I think a lot of that has been mining that has brought in a lot of those people also.

They look like less expensive places than the ones over in Kingston, maybe trailers or small places.

Yes. Well, for a long time, they have modified somewhat, but to begin with, they put building restrictions at Kingston. But then they relinquished a little when more mining and things came in, so that people could come in.

And are there people in those places, or just empty little places? Do people live there?

At Gillman, you mean?

Yeah, Gillman.

Yes, there are quite a few, I think. Last year they must have picked up eight students on the bus.

Oh! Okay, so those are young families.

Yes, young families. And they picked maybe that many up. They had the school bus that ran, the Smoky Valley route, but it was

a whole busload of forty-something students that came in the valley.

Amazing.

That's high school and...

They take them into Austin?

Yes.

Do you have anything more to tell me about this beautiful valley and your life here, before we end the interview?

Do you know, this has been a *beautiful* experience for me. I never thought that I would be out in an isolated, so to speak, area. In fact, when I first came out on ranching, I thought I'd been dropped off the end of the earth, because this time there were no neighbors, the communication, I had lived around people and been gregarious and socially-involved, and it just seemed...I would never have guessed that I would ever come out and live in an area. But it's been a sweet, peaceful, experience. I know when we came to this ranch, first just for the summertimes, I came to no running water, no lights; and cooking, like I said, for twenty people the one summer. And yet I was at peace and felt *good* about being here. The hard work, I've been healthy, and the blessings we've had. I said many times, "If the Lord wants us to be here, he'll open up a way for us to stay," and it has literally come true—even to the extent that we have had strangers come and give us money when we've had notes that were due—someone that knew a nephew or something—and wanted nothing back, never have seen them again.

Oh my!

And I have just felt like that this is Home, and it's lovely, it's beautiful, my life has been so *full* with the family around you that loves you, and family that are all, should you say, God-fearing good citizens of the communities they're in, all participating and active in religious affairs. I don't claim any success of raising anyone famous, but the family is good, solid family, and that I'm thankful to the Lord for. And for our good health—just have good health to go and to do and at our age to be able to still keep going.

Well you and Chester have been, I just know, from your interviews, wonderful role models and parents to this beautiful, big family. It's been a pleasure interviewing you. On behalf of the Lander County Oral History Project, we want to thank you for sharing and participating in this project. This is the end of the interview.

NEDLA CALL YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



NELDA AND J. CHESTER YOUNG, JUNE 19, 1993, SMOKEY VALLEY RANCH

(Photograph taken by Sylvia Arden)



Golden Wedding Celebration for Chester and Nelda Young, Austin, Nevada, July 1991. All nine children were present. Top, left to right: Darrel, Paul, Margaret (Mrs. Michael Dyal), Dorothy (Mrs. Dennis Lee), Bringham, Ralph. Bottom, left to right: Phyllis (Mrs. John Hyatt), Lavar, Nelda, Chester, Deanne (Mrs. Ralph Johnson).

(Original photograph owned by Chester and Nelda Young)

NELDA CALL YOUNG

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